

Key to the Midway: Masculinity at Work

in a Western Canadian Carnival

by

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ABSTRACT

Arising out of an intensive participant-observation research project in which the researcher travelled with a Western Canadian carnival for several months in 1996, working and living as a carnival employee, this ethnographic study¹ of workers in the carnival explores the intersection of gender, race, and social class that provides a work force who willingly undertake jobs that are characterized by hardship and exploitation. The subjective understandings of the workers towards their work and living conditions underscore the salience of gender (particularly protest masculinity) and social class (lower tier of the working class) and illuminate the finding that, far from seeing themselves as oppressed, the workers celebrate their work and the physical toll that it takes on their bodies.

The carnival is male-dominated, and the social construction of masculinity combines with the heavy physical demands of most of the carnival jobs to produce a work environment with conditions that defy common-sense understandings of safety and endurance, but which the male workers, through their adherence to masculinist

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Explanation of Thesis Title: 'Key to the Midway' was a term used often in the carnival and it had amorphous and ambiguous meanings. I heard it used to refer to r-clips, which are multi-purpose clips shaped like a capital-R that are used to fasten rides together, lock ride doors, and hold up people's jeans' zippers. They came in a variety of sizes, from 1 inch to 10 inches.

I also heard the term used in a practical joke that was often played on mooches (carnival customers). A carny would say to a mooch "Go over to that guy and ask him for the key to the midway [or can of striped paint, glass hammer, left-handed screwdriver...]." The other carnival worker would then say to the mooch "I don't have it. Go ask that guy." And so it carried on, as the mooch was sent from place to place to look for the non-existent "key to the midway". When pondering ideas for the title of this thesis, I thought about the elusive, ambiguous and, ultimately unattainable, nature of masculinity.

ideals of strength and heroism, use to express their glorification of heavy, physical labour.

The research also demonstrates how racialization processes outside the carnival predispose male Aboriginal and Metis workers to seek and find employment in the carnival, and that, despite the dominance of White owners and workers, no evidence of discriminatory labour or social practices was located within the carnival culture itself.

Also examined is the issue of mental labour in a working-class environment, not from the traditional standpoint found in most academic discussions of the mental-manual oppositional dichotomy, but from the perspective of the practitioners themselves in the carnival's games, where the use of interpersonal skills is critical to their financial and social success.

Despite the relatively few women in the carnival, their presence serves to validate one of the key tenets of protest masculinity — the norm of heterosexuality. Most of the young women in the carnival practice “emphasized femininity”, a kind of femininity constructed in relation to masculinity, and designed to attract the eyes and bodies of men.

This thesis examines some key concepts in protest masculinity and emphasized femininity, such as violence, mental and manual labour, and social activities, blending in issues of gender, racialization and social class, to add to the growing literature on working class cultures.

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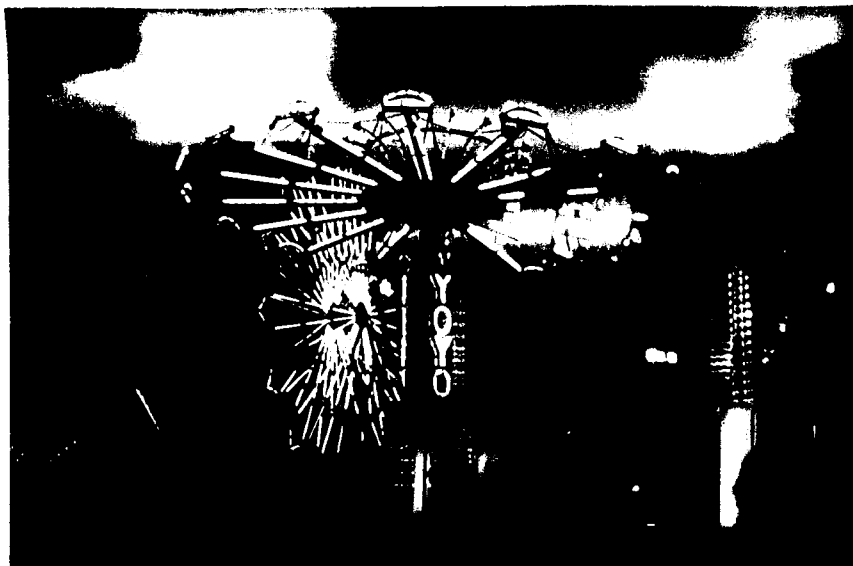
This thesis is dedicated to three fine men in my life for their strong emotional support and faith in me that never faltered — my sons, Matthew and Timothy Maybin, and my father, David Angus (1916-1996). Enormous thanks also go to Dr. Gillian Creese, my thesis supervisor, who provided me with ongoing intellectual and emotional support, particularly during the difficult writing process involved in this thesis. My gratitude also goes to my friends and sisters, Deirdre and Mary, who, though mystified that I would want to run away with the carnival, never wavered in their support and understanding at my need for unobstructed time to finish the writing.

The research could not have been conducted without the co-operation of the owners of Sullivan Amusements. I am most grateful that they welcomed me into the carnival, and permitted me to undertake in-depth observation and interviews.

Finally, immense thanks go to the carnival workers who opened up their hearts and minds to me, privileging me with their thoughts, insights and marvellous words, and extending the carnival camaraderie to include me, all of which combined to create the fruitful set of data upon which this thesis is based.



Sam, a ride guy striking a "manly" pose on his ride truck



Night-time on the carnival midway

Part 1

Chapter 1

Going On the Jump¹ and Setting Up the Show: Introduction

Cameron just came over to the ticket box a few minutes ago and asked me for a photo of myself and he said to me something that actually several people, especially joint people, have said to me, in this last two month period. He said "I have tremendous respect for you and what you're doing". I said "Really? Why?" And he said "Because you're the first person who has ever taken the time to really get to know the carnival and it's not easy what you're doing, and I have tremendous respect for you doing it." And I said "Thank you very much." Now coming from a guy like Cameron, who basically thinks that most women are scum, that's a pretty amazing statement (Personal Notes 26-5).

Introduction:

In *Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins* (1989), Kirby and McKenna argue persuasively that, for people in the margins, the opportunity to engage in, describe and offer an analysis of the ways that they negotiate their experiences rarely arises. They posit that such experiences offer important and insightful information on the way that knowledge is constituted, transformed and understood, provided that research on such groups is conducted with honesty, integrity and with the proviso that the research does justice to people whose experiences are frequently ignored, devalued or deemed to be unworthy of academic interest. As Skeggs claims, "there has been a marked tendency in recent years to move away from talking and listening to those outside of academia" (Skeggs 1997:2). Skeggs further admonishes social scientists for such a reversal which has serious consequences for those whose experiences are rendered

¹"Jump" was a term that referred to the travelling between carnival spots.

invisible, thus segmenting social groups along class lines into domains deemed worthy or unworthy of study (Skeggs 1997:7).

Working class culture is an area that deserves even more in-depth research than has been conducted thus far, specifically qualitative studies that closely examine the social patterns and behaviours of particular working class milieux. In particular, studies such as Paul Willis' (1977) Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs, the more contemporary Canadian study by Thomas Dunk (1991), It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture in Northwestern Ontario, and the recent work of Beverley Skeggs (1997), Formations of Class and Gender demonstrate the usefulness of research that focuses on the standpoint of working-class participants.

The question of why such studies are important, and need to be expanded upon, can be answered by a closer examination of working class culture, its class and race dimensions and clearly gendered norms and activities. I would argue that it is in the working class that the more stark and undiluted characteristics of gendered work and social activities are found, and that these aspects, although equally potent and significant in organizing people's social and work behaviour, become more subtle in form (on the surface) — although not always in function — as one examines more middle class work and life cultures. As the emphasis on the body as a working machine and the task as a physical test of the body's abilities lessens towards a greater focus on sheer mental ability, so does the overt manifestation of gender in work become more diffuse.

No doubt one of the barriers to more scholarly interest in the working class (aside from possible academic elitism) is the pragmatic condition of access to it. People who are members of the working class are frequently fearful and disdainful of what they perceive to be academic intrusion or, in fact, any curiosity or even benign interest from classes "above"² them.

It is certainly not difficult for members of the academic world to observe the working class from the margins. By this, I am referring to studies of working class domains in which the social scientist spends limited periods of time in a working class location, be it a place of work or social life. And there is no question that valuable data can be obtained from such studies. However, a more complete understanding of working class life can only be obtained through total immersion in the working class culture. Living and/or working as a member of the working class culture can provide the social scientist a dual set of data. Not only can the sociologist observe and record the lives of working class members, but he or she themselves can also record their own experiences as a (temporary) member of the working class.

I would argue that this last point is particularly important in terms of providing a lucid voice for the working class. Many working class members, especially those engaged in marginal, low-paid manual labour, are not always highly reflective of the

²I put this word in quotations as I personally do not agree that one class is superior or inferior to another in either structure or value. However, in most discussions on the concept of class, the working class is usually considered to hold lower degrees of power in society. Working-class members' self-perception of being inferior is critical to their need for respectability, especially for female working class members (see Skeggs 1997).

reasons why they behave the way they do, nor why the cultural milieu in which they exist contains elements of oppression and exploitation. The advantage to a social scientist immersing themselves in that culture is that they are able to provide that voice by their own experiences, and to gain a much deeper understanding into the norms and values of the working class by sensitive questioning and, perhaps, paraphrasing back to the subjects their own interpretation, in order to establish a clearer understanding of what is being said. As social scientists, we are trained to question assumptions and beliefs. Total immersion in working class culture, then, combined with the imperative to question and probe, can give rise to valuable research data in heretofore oft-ignored sociological terrain.

As a sociologist with a particular interest in the working class, and many years' experience as a member of the working class³, I have always felt "at home" in a working class domain, and I feel that this experience and affinity have prepared me well to enter, and immerse myself, in one for the express purpose of academic study (not to mention the added benefits of engaging in unbridled laughter and jokes that are characteristic of the working class culture and sadly often lacking in the academic world!).

When the opportunity to conduct research on a carnival presented itself to me, I had few reservations about entering the culture — a working class culture that, in many ways, was familiar yet also contained characteristics unlike any that I had

³Before going to university, I worked for nearly twenty years as a secretary and radio operator in Canada and Great Britain in a wide variety of locations: pulp mill, R.C.M.P. detachments, doctors' office, lawyers' offices, construction company, fire hall, scientific instruments factory.

experienced before — as I was sure that I would be able to “fit in” with little difficulty. Both despite and because of its many unique characteristics, the carnival offered a working class environment that was able to provide much data into the working and social lives of working class inhabitants.

Unlike most researchers, I did not choose to study a carnival and then actively seek one out for such a case study. In fact, I had already decided on a different area for my Ph.D thesis. However, penury and circumstance combined to alter that path, and the opportunity to study a carnival, quite simply, fell into my lap.

Like most people, I was familiar with carnivals (or fairs as the public often calls them). I went to them as a teenager, and I occasionally took my children when finances allowed. My opinion of carnivals was probably similar to that of most people: dirty, noisy places which took on a particularly evil, albeit tantalizing, flavour at night; carnival workers seemed a sinister lot, unwashed and somehow quite alien to us. I would always hurry my children past the games of chance, and worry endlessly when they went on rides, convinced that the rides would fall apart and that the ride operators were uncaring about their human passengers. I certainly never wondered where the carnival workers slept at night, or ate, or how much they were paid. However, in the spring of 1996, I became a carnival worker myself, and many of my preconceptions were confirmed. Far more, however, were shattered as I entered deeper and deeper into the carnival culture. My entry into the carnival culture was precipitated by pure economics. For many university graduate students, an ever-present problem is the need to find money to live on between teaching and research assistantships, or to augment income from those sources in order to make

ends meet. Such was my case when, in the Spring of 1996, I received an offer, by way of a friend, to work for five days at a carnival in Vancouver, British Columbia. When I asked my friend (who was related to a prominent administrative employee in the carnival) what kind of work I would be doing, she simply said "Oh, I don't know. They'll find something for you to do" (personal notes). She also told me what I could expect in the way of a daily wage.

My next step was to telephone the carnival owner to ascertain when and where I should appear, and again I received an equally vague response: "Well, whenever you can get here on Friday will be fine. Just come and see me in the office" (personal notes). I explained that I had a Teaching Assistant commitment at the university until 2:30 PM that day, and could be at the carnival location by about 3:30 PM. I arrived and found the "office" which was a gaudily painted truck trailer; I was then given a long-sleeved sweat shirt with the name of the carnival on it, and told that I was going to be in charge of the haunted house. Not only was I placed in charge of the haunted house; I would also have another employee to supervise. I asked what my duties would be. The answer was that I was just to let no more than ten people into the haunted house at any one time. The carnival was playing at a large indoor entertainment function where admittance was gained by buying a wristband at the door, which allowed people unlimited use of any of the carnival rides (including the haunted house); therefore, there were no tickets to collect.

I also asked who it was that I would be working with. I was told that his name

was "Bob"⁴ and that he was "some twenty-four year old guy that had been picked up off the street". Next, I asked how long I would be working for that day (assuming it would be an eight-hour shift) and how the eating and coffee breaks worked. Rachel (the administrative employee) burst out laughing and told me that I would be working until the show closed that day and that I could take my breaks whenever I wanted.

Thus, even before the work actually began, I began to sense that I was not in a conventional work environment: casual work start and end times, equally arbitrary coffee and dinner breaks, and fellow employees about whom very little was known by the carnival owners. I strolled over to the haunted house and offered a hand to my fellow employee, introducing myself by name. He and I took up our positions at the haunted house and learned how to do the job by trial and error, mentally counting the people who entered and exited the haunted house. We chatted in the quiet periods and I learned from Bob that he had hitchhiked and travelled by train (illegally by jumping into a boxcar) from somewhere in Alberta to Vancouver. He was living in a very rundown hotel in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, and had learned about the carnival the night before in the bar of the hotel. He had come to the carnival lot⁵ that morning to ask for a job and had been hired that day.

Again, I was struck by the contrast between the usual process of a worker acquiring a job through the more conventional process of responding to an

⁴Pseudonyms are used for all carnival workers, as well as for the name of the carnival which I have called Sullivan Amusements. See Appendix A for a full list of Sullivan Amusements personnel referred to in this thesis.

⁵See glossary for full definition.

advertisement in a newspaper, being interviewed and then accepted for the job, and this enormously casual process of learning of the presence of the carnival and then simply showing up at its location and being hired.

That first day I worked from 3:30 PM until 11:00 PM, with random breaks. I did not know what time we would be finishing work that night. I was simply told by anybody that I asked that we would be finished whenever the bosses decided the show⁶ would close. Bob and I decided between us that we would spell each other off for breaks, unless it got really busy. On my breaks, I wandered around the carnival lot, observing the various workers at the rides and the games, my carnival sweatshirt proclaiming that I was a fellow employee.

For the first couple of days (and nights), I felt extremely uncomfortable. Upon reflection, I realized that this discomfort arose out of the fact that I felt very different from everybody else in the carnival. Many of the workers clearly knew each other very well, which contributed to my feelings of marginality. But I also was aware that I looked very different from them. I was clean, well-groomed (relatively speaking) and female. The majority of the workers were male, wearing dirty clothes and looking badly in need of a good hair cut. As well, many of them were extremely thin, to the point of emaciation, and their teeth were in very poor condition.

Their attitude towards me added to my sense of feeling alienated. During my strolls around the rides and games, I was stared at as if I were something of an oddity. I soon reflected on how I must have looked to them: if they appeared to me

⁶See glossary for full definition.

to be somewhat of a collection of human beings with a lifestyle alien to mine, then I, perhaps, must have looked too "respectable". In fact, at one point, one of the workers asked me if I was a mother, because I "didn't look like a worker" (personal notes).

Finally, on day three, one of the ride workers (Jim) came to a table where I was sitting on my break and introduced himself to me, joining me for a coffee, and the ice appeared to have been broken. As he and I strolled back onto the lot together, many of the workers greeted me with hellos and smiles. And I suddenly felt more comfortable. By the next morning, I was greeted with waves, grins and catcalls of appreciation from the male workers. Jim, in fact, became a real friend to me over the next few months, and made a point of keeping me informed of rumours and the ongoing stories among the carnival workers.

About mid-way during my first night working at the carnival, Bob came back from one of his breaks and said to me that "drags were out". Having no idea what that meant, I asked him, and he told me that it meant that the day's pay was available at the office. I responded that I would be getting paid at the end of my five-day stint and Bob looked quite astonished. Puzzled, I asked him what the drag consisted of, and he told me an amount that was less than one third of what I had been told I would be paid. I kept this information to myself, but was mystified as to why I should be getting paid so much more than Bob. In subsequent conversations with other carnival workers that day, I learned that all the carnival workers received this wage — \$30.00 a day.

During those five days, I learned more, through observation and casual

questions, about how the carnival operated, how the workers felt about their jobs and why they ended up working for the carnival; I began to jot their comments and my observations down in a little notebook. Jim, an Aboriginal man in his mid-40's, was from a small town on Vancouver Island, and worked as a millwright for twelve years. He joined the carnival three years ago, and loved "the freedom and the magic...there's nothing like the mud, the sun, the rain, and the real good people" (personal notes). However, inwardly, I questioned why a man trained and experienced as a millwright would choose to work at a job with such excruciatingly low wages and long hours.

I also met Lance, a ride operator on the ride nearest the haunted house. Lance was 33 and had worked as a truck driver and in a pulp mill on the B.C. coast. He had actually answered an advertisement in the newspaper and he "just wanted to see what it was like" (personal notes). He, in fact, was utterly appalled at the long hours and the low pay but again, mysteriously, chose to continue to work for the carnival.⁷ Lance told me about his superior on the ride: a French-Canadian male who seemed to be extremely inept at his job, although he had apparently been doing the job for years: "It's the only thing he seems to know", said Lance to me (personal notes).⁸

⁷In fact, he was later fired by the carnival. He became known as lazy and opinionated among the workers. He then became ill about one month into his work in the carnival, and was hospitalized. When the carnival owners learned that his doctor would not allow him to go back to work for several weeks, they took his "pink slip" to him in the hospital and fired him.

⁸This man, along with his brother, apparently had a habit of showing up at the beginning of every carnival season for work, but rarely lasted a month. Twice they got drunk in a bar and were arrested and jailed. Another time they were fired for showing up for

The remaining four days that I spent working at the carnival were a blur of noise, exhaustion and mounting astonishment at what I both observed and experienced. I noticed that the majority of the workers were male: all the ride operators were male, and all but a very few of the games workers were male. The only females that I noticed were working in the food concessions, as well as Rachel and one other female who worked in the office.

I also noted that, with the exception of a few Aboriginal ride operators, all the workers were White⁹, and ranged enormously in age, from very young (some did not even look as old as fifteen) to quite old (some appeared to be in their 60's¹⁰), especially for the difficult manual labour involved in much of the ride operation. I was astounded at the poor wages that the carnival workers were paid (most of which they spent nightly on cigarettes and beer after the show closed). I was equally

work drunk. When I asked Rachel why they kept re-hiring them, she just shrugged and said "Well, they know the rides. And we need them at the start of the season so they can at least train other guys to run the ride" (personal notes).

⁹In Chapters Five and Six, where I discuss racialization, readers will note reference to a substantial number of Aboriginal and Metis workers. In fact, many of the "White" workers observed early in the research were actually Metis.

¹⁰As I became more immersed in the carnival over the next few weeks, I discovered that I quite frequently incorrectly guessed workers' ages: Most people appeared (to me) to be at least ten years older than their actual age. Jim, for example, who had befriended me at my first carnival "spot" was actually several years younger than me, yet I had thought he was in his late 50's. Even the "younger" workers — who looked to me as if they were in their early 20's — were actually only 14 or 15. This had some amusing consequences for me personally: most carnival workers thought that I was in my mid to late 20's (rather than 47) and it was not until towards the end of the carnival season that my real age was 'discovered' somewhat accidentally when one of the ride guys, during a conversation with Rachel, alluded to our being of the same age (she was 26 at the time), whereupon she burst out laughing and informed him that I was the same age as her mother! This "news" quickly made the rounds of the carnival lot and I was besieged by workers over the next few days asking me if this was indeed true: despite my confirmation of this fact, many refused to believe me.

horrified by the long hours: apart from my first day on the job, I worked thirteen hours a day for the remaining four days. I found that by the second day, I was completely exhausted by the relentless noise and people, conditions which were such a far cry from the regular life of a graduate student which is usually very quiet and largely isolated from other human beings.

And the questions began to pile up relentlessly inside me, much of them in the form of contradictions. I had come into this domain with a strong expectation that the rules and conditions of other workplaces would also apply here — why was it, then, that none of these rules seemed to apply in the carnival? And the few workers that I had come to know in my brief time with the carnival mostly seemed to have other qualifications and experience that would have rendered them suitable for other, more conventional and infinitely more pleasant and well-paid, work — why had they chosen to work here? Why was I being paid at one rate, and all the others at a much lower rate? And although the vast majority of the carnival workers gave the appearance of being highly unkempt and unhealthy individuals, they seemed to enjoy a strong camaraderie amongst themselves, which had, inexplicably, been extended to include me, although I certainly appeared in every sense to be so much different than they.

However, the main questions that I was left with were: How can people do this kind of work on a full-time basis? And how is it that a work domain exists where most of our assumptions about work, workers and work conditions are so blatantly confounded by a milieu that appears to contravene nearly all ethical and legal standards of what is considered to be acceptable in a late twentieth-century western

work environment?

At the end of the five days, I could barely feel or think with any clarity, as I was so completely exhausted. When I collected my pay for my work at the carnival, I struck up a conversation with the wife of the carnival owner. Lynn asked me what I thought of my few days of being a “carny”¹¹: I diplomatically declared that it had been a very interesting experience. She then asked me if I would like to work as a ticket seller at their next spot, a mall in a small community just outside Vancouver, the following weekend. I said that I would and then casually mentioned that, as a sociologist, I had found it to be a very fascinating experience. She then invited me to work for the carnival for the remainder of the season and added that I would be welcome to do research on the carnival. I had already thought that the carnival would be a fascinating subject for my Ph.D thesis, but was sure that the owners would never consent to my conducting such a research project. I then explained exactly what I would want to do if I did conduct such research, indicating the depth of my research methods (interviewing and observing) and she said “Sure! We’ve got nothing to hide!” (personal notes). This statement by Lynn was, I felt, significant on two levels. First, it demonstrated to me that the practices of the carnival owners and workers were completely acceptable to the practitioners thereof; and, secondly, that perhaps they had been engaged in such practices for so long that, in fact, they were not even aware that many of their practices were both unethical and illegal¹².

¹¹See glossary for definition.

¹²I explore the variety of illegal practices I located in the carnival throughout this thesis.

With this offer of the carnival as a research site, I talked to my supervisor at the university and confessed to her that I had been moonlighting as a carnival worker to make ends meet. I added that the owner had asked me to "go on the road"¹³ with them this summer" to work and to conduct sociological research. Fortunately, my supervisor agreed that it was indeed a rare opportunity to catch a glimpse of the inner work and lives of carnival workers. Consequently, I finished up my necessary university work, travelling on many occasions from March through May 1996 to join the carnival on weekends to continue observations and work, and then joined the carnival at the beginning of July 1996 in its long trek (10,000 kilometers, according to Paul Sullivan) through the four western provinces of British Columbia, ending in October 1996.

The Research Problem

Despite their frequent visits to various communities throughout North America, carnivals have rarely been the focus of academic inquiry (Bryant 1972; Truzzi 1973). In fact, there have been no sociological analyses of carnivals in Canada at all, and only a very few on carnivals in the United States, all of which are now nearly thirty years old¹⁴.

Carnivals do, nonetheless, present a worthwhile area of study in work

¹³See glossary for definition.

¹⁴It is important to point out that, given the elderly status of most scholarly literature on carnivals, their findings might be considered outdated by today's standards. Any references to this literature in this thesis in order to validate a statement will be corroborated by my own personal experiences and observations while working in the carnival. In fact, I found that very little has changed since these original studies were conducted.

organizations, gender, class, racialization, and social interrelationships. The carnival work culture provides a setting in which many people live and work quite differently than those in the larger culture. It is a unique culture populated by unconventional people with an intense camaraderie and a strong commitment to mutual obligations and expectations. However, as will be demonstrated, it is also the case that the carnival culture has applicability to other areas of social inquiry (e.g. work and gender, race and class).

A significant feature of carnivals is the strong boundary maintained between carnivals and their outside communities which creates "a barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant" (Easto and Truzzi 1973:550). The greatest difficulty presented to any carnival research, then, is gaining access to carnivals in a way that can reveal their culture in sociologically meaningful ways. Carnival owners like to present an image of respectability to the general public (Easto and Truzzi 1973:551; Hautzinger 1990:30) and generally permit only distanced, and glamourized, journalistic accounts of their domains to be represented¹⁵. Journalists are considered to be outsiders and, as

¹⁵When the owners of the carnival studied by me initially invited me to do research, they gave me a photocopy of a Toronto Star newspaper article written by a reporter who happens to be the son of the "doughnut joint guy" (owner of one of the independent food concessions). The carnival owners exhibited pride in the article which did, indeed, present the carnival as an exciting, magical place with hardworking employees but, significantly to me, omitted any real critical reference to the unbelievably difficult working conditions and hours, or to the harsh living environments for all but the most affluent carnival workers.

In a more recent newspaper (August 1999), an article describing several attractions at an annual Vancouver exhibition similarly portrayed the owner of a large game concession (whom I met briefly) as a benevolent, compassionate employer highly protective of his employees: he and his wife are characterized as "...designated guardians for the 300 or so young people who work and travel with them". The article also quotes the games owner as organizing "an after-hours morale-boosting soccer game for his crew [in which] everyone

such, are kept at a safe distance from the realities of the carnival culture which are camouflaged by the illusion of respectability and are self-contained within the mobile carnival culture "like a ship" as Easto and Truzzi (1973) comment. Most accounts of the carnival are anthropological or journalistic descriptions from the perspective of an "objective" outsider that are "usually distorted in their presentation of carnival life" (Easto and Truzzi 1973:551).

An examination of a carnival culture, from within the carnival itself, provides an increased understanding of the carnival work structure and the workers themselves. My observations from within the culture provide a valuable contribution to the present paucity of literature on these mobile and distinct subcultures that are, by their very nature, very difficult to enter, much less comprehend, unless the researcher is able to fully enter the carnival culture for a sustained period of time.

As will be explained further in Chapter 3 (Methodological Considerations), I began this research project without a firm or focused theoretical question for guidance as the carnival constitutes relatively unexplored sociological territory. Consequently, I did not go into the domain with theoretical blinkers dutifully in place (as much positivist so-called 'objective' research is conducted). Instead, I entered with several research questions that were all connected to the starting question of: How and why do people engage in this kind of work? These questions were:

1. How do carnival workers understand their work and life on an everyday

has to play. It's mandatory...". Considering that most carnivals do not close until midnight and that there are no days off, it is hard to imagine when these "after-hours" games actually take place or whether, in fact, they actually do (I do not cite the newspaper itself in order to maintain confidentiality, as the man's name and his photograph are in the article).

basis?

2. How does the carnival, as a social and economic structure, operate on a day-to-day basis?
3. What is the nature of the relationships between (and among) the workers themselves, and among the workers and managers?
4. How do carnival owners find workers for the carnival jobs?
5. How do the carnival workers gain access to the jobs in the carnival?
6. What (if any) are the classed, gendered and racialized aspects of the work, the workers and their relationships to each other?

These were the more general questions that informed the set of interview questions, as well as my overall observations of the carnival culture and my own experiences as a worker.

As the research progressed, I began to develop an unnamed but viable explanation for the initial starting question of why and how people do such difficult work under equally difficult conditions: there was something that eclipsed the possibility that other options were available to them outside the carnival and, simultaneously, reinforced that what they were doing was somehow of value to them as individuals and as a group.

Credit goes to Thomas Dunk and his (1991) *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture in Northwestern Ontario* with helping me name what had been unnamed: masculinity. I had taken Dunk's book with me to read during my time with the carnival and Dunk was enormously helpful in grounding the carnival research in something that aided me in making sense of my observations and

experiences, thereby helping me to 'stay sociological'. Another book which also proved to be very interesting, useful and stabilizing (although not purchased specifically for the latter two reasons) was Michael Holzach's (1993) *The Forgotten People: A Year Among the Hutterites*. The carnival had been in a small town in Manitoba and many of the customers were Hutterite. One of the ride guys, whose home was near some Hutterite communities, told me with great authority that it was common knowledge that incest was rampant among the Hutterites, and that Hutterites paid non-Hutterite males to father their daughters' children. Although I strongly doubted what he had said, my interest was piqued in the Hutterite community and so I purchased Holzach's book at a nearby bookstore. Holzach, a journalist, had spent one year living in a Hutterite community, immersing himself in the culture completely, and living fully as a Hutterite. Strangely, I found many parallels between the Hutterite community and its relatively insulated culture, and the carnival culture: I also drew empathy from Holzach himself as he grappled with inexplicable and often confounding practices that left him questioning himself as much as those he was observing.

There were very few people in the carnival to whom I could speak completely candidly (other than my tape recorder which was a great therapeutic solace on occasion!) and I found that to read a few pages of Dunk or Holzach each night after finishing my shift in the ticket-box helped to 'remove' me as a worker and 'replace' the sociologist in me -- often a struggle, and one that became more intense the longer I stayed with the carnival. As time advanced, I found that the 'outside world' receded farther and farther. I was acutely aware of this and made every attempt to

'keep connected', as to do otherwise could have tainted my observations by seeing everything as 'natural' and, therefore, unworthy of record or commentary.

There were no radios or televisions in the carnival, other than in some of the royalties¹⁶ fifth wheel trailers. Time was a blur of moving from spot to spot: even I, recording daily on my tape recorder and always including the date, would have to count ahead from the last known date to find out what date it was. Even the days of the week were not readily known: if it was teardown¹⁷ day, it probably was a Sunday. I found that every person in the carnival with whom I spoke about this shared in the experience of not knowing what day it was, nor what the date was. Time was measured by spots¹⁸: If one asked when something happened, the reply was always "Two spots ago" or "The spot after [town]". As I became personally aware of the fading of the world outside the carnival, I began to take steps to off-set it, for two reasons. The first was that, personally, I needed to know what was happening in the news and, secondly, I knew that it was also crucial to remain sufficiently detached sociologically and not fade completely into the carnival culture. On the jumps¹⁹, I would listen to as much news as possible, which was often difficult as, in the more rural parts of the prairie provinces especially, news was often very local and seemed to consist of wheat reports and obituaries. I bought newspapers daily but, again, the local papers (often the only ones available) contained equally limited

¹⁶See glossary for definition.

¹⁷See glossary for definition

¹⁸See glossary for definition.

¹⁹See glossary for definition.

and parochial information. When the carnival returned to British Columbia, about six weeks after I travelled with them, I finally saw a Vancouver Sun newspaper and literally jumped for joy — I read it completely and began to feel more re-connected to the world.

None of the other carnival workers to whom I spoke knew about, or had any interest in, current events outside the carnival. Occasionally, I would have a newspaper with me in the ticket box and, at quiet times with few customers, ride guys would walk over and ask to borrow sections of the paper, but their preferred reading was magazines about tatoos or motorbikes. The other female ticket sellers' literary purchases consisted of National Enquirers and Soap Opera Digests, the latter being a particularly unusual choice of reading matter, given that the employees were effectively cut off from all television for eight months of the year. (Even though I offered them my newspapers, they declined my offers.) Despite my efforts to remain in touch with national and international newsworthy events, I discovered, upon my return from the carnival, that much had happened that I was completely unaware of, which added to my impression that, for a brief but significant period of time, I had all but disappeared from 'regular' society.

It was only after re-entering my 'normal' world for a period of time that the explanation of the ethos of masculinity developed as a way to understand the overall social patterns that I observed (with the unwitting assistance of Dunk (1991) as mentioned above!). This thesis, therefore, will show evidence of the ways that masculinist norms shape, perpetuate and act, variously, as both a liberating and a constraining element in the carnival culture.

This research also adds to the growing literature on masculinities: As will be argued later, beliefs about masculinity are of critical importance to the way that workers (both male and female) perceive their jobs and their lives in the carnival. It is equally fundamental to the perpetuation of work and social relationships within the culture. I also include discussions of social class and processes of racialization that I located in the carnival.

In the remainder of Part I, I present a review (Chapter Two) of the literature on carnivals much of which is mostly both sketchy and somewhat outdated. The literature review also includes case studies on particular working class cultures that inform both the methodology and the emphasis on masculinity in this thesis. The contributions of research on masculinity are also outlined, although a more full discussion on masculinity is found in Chapter Four.

Chapter Three explains the methodology used in the research, as well as the debate over ethnographic adequacy as argued by Kenneth Stoddart: I offer evidence that I did attempt to attain such adequacy by the methodology as well as the ways that I dealt with my presence as researcher and ethnographer.

In the final two chapters of Part I (Chapters Four and Five), I provide a detailed description of the social and economic structures of Sullivan Amusements, making linkages between the carnival that is the focus of the research and the earlier literature on carnivals, pointing out the similarities and differences that I observed and experienced.

In Part II, I begin with a theoretical discussion of working-class masculinity (Chapter Six). The next four chapters focus on particular aspects of working-class

masculinity that inform the work and social life of the carnival workers: I look specifically at pride in manual labour (Chapter Seven), violence (Chapter Eight), mental labour used in the game joints (Chapter Nine), and social activities and relationships (Chapter Ten). I end with a concluding chapter that sums up my findings and discusses the future of Sullivan Amusements.



Royalty fifth-wheel trailer/pickup truck and my home/transport



Two veteran Aboriginal ride guys

Chapter 2

What Route Do I Take to Get to the Next Spot?: Exploring New Ethnographic Terrain

I'm listening to Dwight Yoakam sing "A Thousand Miles from Nowhere" -- and is it ever appropriate. Here I am, about 150 kilometers west of Yorkton, Saskatchewan, on Highway 16, out in the middle of nowhere. Nothing but little old farms and fields, and long, straight roads. It's about 9:30 at night, the sun's going down, Yeah, I can see the sunset behind me in the rearview mirror. I wonder where I'll be sleeping tonight. I guess I'll be pitching my tent at midnight someplace (Personal notes 1-12).

Introduction:

In the previous chapter, I explained the rather unorthodox manner in which the opportunity to study a carnival became available to me. As well, it was pointed out that the central research problem, and subsequent research questions, revolved around the many contradictions that I located through my observations and experiences as a worker. The guiding conundrum of this initial exposure to the carnival environment was equally as contradictory: Self-reflection during these early (and largely informal) research stages led to the tentative conclusion that it was very unlikely that I would find a theory that neatly captured the many nuances of the phenomenon that I was experiencing and observing. In fact, I considered various mainstream theories on work and social relationships in an initial effort to make sense of it all. But what I found was that I routinely rejected each of these theories as anomalies began to pile up to the point of necessary refutations of conventional theorizing.

I chose to take a more ethnographic stance towards the carnival, by which I intended to act as a mediator "between two worlds or systems of meaning -- the

world of the ethnographer and the world of cultural members" (Van Maanen 1988:4).

Although I knew that eventually I would need to select out a particular theoretical guiding principle in order to make a valid contribution to social science (as opposed to writing a purely narrative account of my carnival "adventure"), I did not want to make the mistake of deciding *a priori* what this theoretical framework would be, lest it not only taint my data collection but, even more importantly, render me blind to other phenomena.

Kirby and McKenna caution the social scientist who researches from the margins to "listen to our instincts", by which they mean that we need to "recogniz[e]/embrac[e] the contradictions and questions that often make us most uncomfortable" (Kirby and McKenna 1989:31). I chose just such an 'uncomfortable' route so that all the voices and experiences (including my own) could be accommodated in the research process. Adding to the discomfort was the essentially atheoretical starting point for the project. I was acutely aware that I was about to traverse a terrain that did contain some possible methodological landmines for a sociologist; conducting research on a quixotic and unpredictable social landscape would no doubt require some occasional quick-thinking in order not to become alienated (possibly to the point of being expelled) from the culture itself.

And, from a scholarly point of view, I also knew that I was embarking on a type of research that is not always considered to be highly conventional in mainstream sociology. Van Maanen, perhaps rather harshly, condemns conventional sociology for its "status hierarchy" which rewards those who concentrate on building theory sometimes to the extent that the empirical world

simply vanishes (Van Mannen 1988:20). He further argues that sociological ethnographies (as opposed to anthropological ethnographies) are considered by the discipline of sociology to be "a low-budget, modest, somewhat odd, ...more or less respectable product that is peripheral to the field and its goals" (Van Mannen 1988:22), and that:

Sociological fieldworkers have long been considered by their social science colleagues as students of "nuts, sluts, and perverts" (zootsuit sociology) (Van Mannen 1988:42).

It is certainly the case that, among many of my university peers, my having "run away with the carnival" for eight months elicited many comments that reflected a mixture of awe, horror and vicarious envy, a testament to Van Mannen's statement that many people regard such an ethnographer "as an exotic-mongering romantic who seeks only to don a loincloth and dance by the fire with savages to the beat of the Tom-Tom" (Van Mannen 1988:39).

Fieldwork may, of course, be conducted in such romantic, constantly pleasurable surroundings. However, a more fair characterization of in-depth (meaning total immersion) ethnographic fieldwork, especially when conducted from the margins on the marginalized (as is the case of this carnival project), is that it is often extremely demanding: physically, emotionally and hermeneutically.

The above rather lengthy precursor to this literature review is a necessary caveat to the somewhat unorthodox process that I followed in order to buttress myself sufficiently in terms of worthy scholarly readings in preparation for the research but, at the same time, not become saturated to the point of developing a kind of research myopia, wherein I might only see what I chose to see (which would

have admittedly made the data collection and this written project a much easier task, but would have done a grave disservice to the carnival workers and their lives). In short, I chose to take a more inductive route to advancing knowledge, rather than the deductive model that effectively pre-determines the theory within which one is obliged to more, or less, rigorously reside as, even if the end result is a refutation of that theory, the very presence of such theory throughout the research project necessarily limits one's scope of observation to the theory's parameters.

Once I learned of the almost complete non-existence of any previous literature that specifically examined North American carnivals, I felt ethically compelled to conduct the research in as inclusive a manner as possible: utilizing ethnographic techniques, but with the end goal of contributing to existing research on one or more elements of the sociology of work, that would include, but not necessarily be limited to, issues of gender, class and race.

Once my status as a carnival worker *qua* carnival worker transformed into that of researcher and worker, I embarked on a search for any other sociological (and anthropological) literature on the carnival that would be relevant. As reported below, the findings were few and dated. My next endeavour was to broaden the search scope to include descriptive case studies and/or ethnographies of other working class milieux, particularly studies of male-dominated locales: as I explain further in this chapter, two of these had especially profound implications for me, in providing me with some necessary starting-points from which to begin the research project and, later, for supplying some of the more significant explanations for many of the paradoxes that I found within the carnival.

After leaving the carnival at the end of the season, I immediately embarked on transcribing my research tapes, a process which took many months due to the omnipresent background noise in all of the tapes. I experienced a strong sense of emotional withdrawal in the months immediately following my re-introduction into mainstream society. I was careful to analyze why and how this evolution occurred, and I found that as I became more accustomed to my former life and surroundings, patterns began to emerge in the data that I had not seen so readily during my total immersion in the carnival culture. It was after these patterns emerged, then, that I set out on my second search for literature that focused (mainly) on issues of working-class masculinity, especially protest masculinity, femininity and the relations between, and within, these gendered aspects.

I now present in more detail the literature that, initially, provided me with some valuable insights into the carnival social world and, later, strengthened my findings of the salience of gender in the ways that carnival workers understand and, variously, negotiate and resist, their social and work worlds. However, it is necessary for me first to fully define what is meant by "carnival" before continuing with my discussion of the literature search.

Carnivals: Definition and History

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a carnival is defined as a travelling funfair or circus. Similarly, Samuel Kinser refers to it as "a travelling collection of amusements which include games of chance, sideshows, and thrilling rides" (Kinser 1990:3). It is difficult to precisely define a carnival because, as Easto and Truzzi (1973) state, carnivals vary tremendously in size and components, and

have altered in meaning enormously over time. The word "carnival" originates in fifteenth century celebrations of pre-Lenten meat-eating (Kinser 1990:3), but developed a broader meaning in "the commonplace American sense of gaudy and somewhat disreputable pleasure" (Kinser 1990:4). The carnival in its present form in North America has roots in the 1893 World Exposition in Chicago, and evolved into a portable melange of attractions that travelled to small towns and agricultural fairs (Easto and Truzzi 1973:554-555; see also Bryant 1972)²⁰. Carnivals have historically had a distinctively seasonal flavour, beginning with their connections to religious and pagan festivals but now (with the exception of Southern United States carnivals) for the more pragmatic economic reason that, as outdoor operations, the carnival is most attractive to its customers in the warmer spring, summer and early fall months.

It is also important to distinguish between carnivals and circuses. As Easto and Truzzi (1973) point out, carnivals have a very distinct and separate cultural character from circuses. Circuses are primarily displays of entertainment with minimal customer/worker interaction, as opposed to the carnival that thrives and, in fact, depends on customer interaction. Circuses also differ from carnivals organizationally. They usually have one owner, for whom all employees work, in contrast to carnivals which, despite having one owner, also have contracts with

²⁰A more recent source, the (United States) Outdoor Amusement Business Association, states that the first carnival in North America appeared in 1894 when Frank C. Bostock created a model of an English Fair in the U.S. (O.A.B.A.:2000 'Carnival Facts').

"independents"²¹ who pay the show owner either a percentage of ticket sales or a flat rental fee (independents in Sullivan Amusements pay strictly on a percentage basis).

Another important distinction concerns the carnival's labour force. Circuses have a relatively stable work force, whereas many carnival workers are transient, moving in and out of carnival work throughout the season, as well as between different carnivals (Easto and Truzzi 1973:553; Hautzinger 1990:29), a feature particularly common to ride and games workers.

As well as defining the carnival in terms of its history and its distinction from the circus, it is salient to this thesis to define it by its features. The most accurate definition (by today's standards and relevant to the particular carnival that is the focus of this study) is one offered by Easto and Truzzi (1973) (see also Bryant 1972)²². Carnivals contain three main features: rides, which are, as Bryant claims, the "backbone of the carnival" (Bryant 1972:183); games; and food concessions (these latter two are also known as joints²³). There are also a few "novelty joints":

²¹See glossary for definition.

²²I will modify these literal definitions in order to bring them up-to-date. For example, they refer to shows or exhibits as a basic carnival component which, now, no longer exist, due to legislative bans and public moral outcry. Examples are freak shows (e.g. 'two-headed babies'), 'girlie' (strip) shows, or animal acts (Easto and Truzzi 1973:552; and see also Bryant 1972:185). The carnival that I studied was one of the last carnivals in North America to have vestiges of these shows, according to the carnival owner. As recently as the early 1980's they still had a 'fat lady' (who used to have to be shoved through the door of the pie car and would sit on 'ride guys' as a joke) and a fake 'monkey' show — when the owner's son was aged about eight years old, he would be dressed up as a monkey and perform as such (field notes).

²³See glossary for full definition.

concessions where stuffed animals and other toys and trinkets are sold.

Carnivals range enormously in size, from small operations containing only a few of the above features, to larger enterprises like the carnival studied in this research project. The very large carnivals have over one hundred rides, fifty food joints and one hundred game joints, all travelling together in a convoy of large trucks and trailers, motorhomes and fifth-wheel trailers (O.A.B.A.:2000, 'Carnival Facts'). At carnival sites, the rides are usually arranged (or 'loked'²⁴) in a horseshoe shape, with food joints and ticket boxes centrally located, and game joints located in the middle of the midway²⁵, as well as between rides.

The workers in carnivals can be categorized as follows: the show owner (usually white male) and other managerial personnel (predominantly white male); independent ride, game and concession owners/workers (all male); ticket sellers (all female); and ride operations (usually a foreman and his assistant²⁶).

There is a clear social hierarchy among the carnival personnel, indicative of its element of "latent feudalism" (Bryant 1972:192). Gross (1978:131) also highlights the "pre-industrial setting" of the carnival. The highest rank is held by the show owner, whose power to (usually randomly) hire and fire is both respected and feared by workers. Bryant characterizes the show owner as resembling "a Chinese war lord, a panzer general, or a feudal nobleman overseeing his fief in performing

²⁴See glossary for definition.

²⁵See glossary for definition.

²⁶I use the male form deliberately: with the exception of a very few female ride workers on the small children's rides, all ride operators are male in the carnival.

his work role" (Bryant 1972:192). Closely connected with the show owner are the administrative personnel, often related by family or through friendships (Easto and Truzzi 1973:559), who act as conveyors of undesirable information concerning employees' behaviour to the show owner and, variously, control the day-to-day financial dealings, supervise the activities of the ride foremen, conduct the electrical and welding maintenance work, and handle customer complaints.

Beneath this group are the independent owners/workers, with the independent ride owners holding prestige equal to the administrative staff: the larger (more expensive) the ride, the higher the status of the owner. The independent food concession owners and workers hold a more distanced status but enjoy overall respect. The game concessions workers, however, are largely scorned by the other carnival workers, especially by the ride guys. Easto and Truzzi (1973) place the ride guys at the bottom of the hierarchy but, based on my experience with the carnival, I found that the "joint bums"²⁷ were considered by all other employees to be beneath contempt (with the exception of some highly skilled "agents"²⁸) — there is rarely any socializing between joint bums and other carnival workers (Hautzinger 1990:29). These distinctions have remained relatively constant over time (Easto and Truzzi 1973; Bryant 1972).

The carnival work (and social) domain can be characterized as a highly differentiated prestige system, which may not be readily apparent to an outside

²⁷This was the name given to workers in the joints, although they rarely referred to themselves as joints bums, preferring the term "joint liner".

²⁸See glossary for definition.

observer. There is, however, a very strong sense of community that draws all carnival workers together. This is evident in the close socializing of carnival workers both during and after work (although there is a clear class-based line of demarcation between the groups: the "royalty" rarely associated themselves socially with the other carnival workers). However, class lines disappeared during times of crisis: I observed (and experienced) several occasions that drew all carnival workers together. At one spot, a large cable burst into flames in front of my ticket box, and the electrical power was cut off from several rides and concessions as a result. In a matter of seconds, a make-shift fence was erected to protect the public, the fire was extinguished and the carnival electrician hastily re-joined the cable. The personnel involved in this endeavour included "royalty", ride guys, joint bums and food concession workers.

A strong value in the carnival is freedom, and it is a reason given by many workers for joining the carnival (Bryant 1972:193; Easto and Truzzi 1973:559). The freedom that workers seek is freedom from conventional organizational life, wherein they have found rejection (Hautzinger 1990:30), which creates something of a paradox. Carnival life is mind-numbingly difficult and exhausting, due to very long working hours (often fourteen hours a day, seven days a week), ever-present noise, crowds of people and often adverse weather conditions (Bryant 1972:187). Although they do not attain freedom in the environmental and structural conditions of carnival life, workers find freedom in the form of escape from past mistakes. Being hired by the carnival involves minimal formality: people are literally hired at face value and their past is never investigated. As Bryant states, "once hired, an

individual is assured of anonymity if desired and knows that no one will pry into his [sic] past history or personal business” (Bryant 1972:193). Thus, even if a carnival worker has a criminal record, or a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse, he or she is not seen by others (or self) as bad or evil for, as Bogdan states in his discussion of “showmen”, “groups that defy societal norms seldom do [see themselves as evil]” (Bogdan 1988:92).

This norm of assured privacy manifests itself similarly in the shared expectation that workers do not impose their will or opinions on others; transgression of this norm results in ostracization (Bryant 1972:193). Such violators are considered to be troublesome by both workers and administrators, and are immediately fired. I did, however, notice a gender difference in the levels of tolerance of such behaviour by the “royalty”. The transgressions by females were more likely to be ignored or minimized, as a consequence of the somewhat contradictory notion that although females and their gendered work were considered of less importance, female workers for those jobs were usually harder to find. It was never a hardship for the carnival bosses to find male workers; at every spot we played, men came onto the lot looking for work. But there were far fewer jobs available for women in the carnival, and only rarely did women come specifically to find work at the carnival.

Although hiring²⁹ is conducted easily and informally, full acceptance into the

²⁹See Appendix B for the forms that some of the Sullivan Amusements’ personnel signed. I was aware of only two people — both ride guys — who actually had been asked to sign these forms.

carnival community does not occur so readily. To be accepted by the other workers, the newly hired person must demonstrate particular qualities, most notably the rejection of "the way of life of the ordinary people in the outside world" (Bryant 1972:192). Friendliness, mutual respect and the willingness to help in any circumstance are expected and crucial for acceptance into the group culture. Any worker (the exceptions being the show owner and administrative staff) who is perceived to be snobbish is also restricted from entry into the carnival community.

The carnival work and social structure, then, provides a location in which many individuals can exist in a way that they may not be able to do in mainstream society. As Bryant states, "in a setting where one's personal idiosyncracies, abnormalities, and aberrations are discounted or overlooked, the individual surely enjoys a 'therapeutic milieu'" (Bryant 1972:197). An important aspect of this therapeutic autonomy is the distinction made by carnies between themselves and the customers, or any person who lives outside the carnival (known as "locals"). It has already been noted that the carnival owners try to present an image of conformity to the norms of the outside world.. The carnival workers and customers, however, "share a degree of mutual hostility", which Bryant attributes to the carnival's earlier history of exploitation and "residual cynicism" between workers and the general public (Bryant 1970:187). The general view held by carnival workers is revealed in the names used to describe customers: marks, squares or suckers³⁰

³⁰In fact, the only one of these three terms that I ever heard used was "mark", and the most commonly-used name for a customer was "mooch", particularly by the joint bums. The ride guys would call the customers "locals".

(Bryant 1970:188; Hautzinger 1990:31; Oliver 1966:281). Carnival workers know that customers are suspicious of them (especially the game joint workers) and derive great pleasure in taking customers' money in an almost retaliatory response to what carnival workers consider to be the contemptuous conventional life and work that most customers are engaged in (Bryant 1970:188).

Carnivals: Literature

As mentioned in the first chapter, the literature on carnivals is sparse. Carnivals have been largely ignored by the sociological community, other than for a brief period in the 1970's. Literature on carnivals can be loosely categorized in the following ways:

I located an abundance of anthropological studies of particular Carnivals (e.g. Mardi Gras in New Orleans, or Brazil) whose main foci are the Carnivals' history in terms of cultural and symbolic meaning to the greater culture in which they reside and the relationship between the Carnival and its costumed participants, with frequent references to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1965) *Rabelais and His World* (Damatta 1991; Kinser 1990; Logan 1986). These Carnivals, and studies thereof, bear little resemblance to the carnival as defined in this thesis, as they are situationally-specific and bound up in strong and particularized cultural beliefs and religious practices. The only contribution of this type of anthropological literature to this project is some of the historical data contained in introductory chapters.

A more contemporary, and applicable, study is "*American Carnival Speech: Making the Jump*" (1990) by Sarah Hautzinger. Hautzinger, then an Anthropology graduate student, wrote this very brief article as a result of working in a carnival.

She makes the point that the unique speech used by carnies is an example of their attempts to maintain their “distinctive culture” despite “rapid turnover and permeable boundaries” (Hautzinger 1990:29). She further points out that a key criterion for entry into the carnival culture is knowledge of this language, illustrated in an example I provide of a carnival worker’s (John) entry into the carnival in Chapter Four. There appear to be no further publications by Hautzinger which is unfortunate, as her contribution towards an understanding of the carnival language as a linguistic manifestation of the unique and exclusive nature of the carnival culture, despite the paper’s brevity, is significant. In the glossary, I make reference to Hautzinger’s entries, to distinguish between terminology that I also found, that may or may not have changed in meaning, and words that are not found in Hautzinger’s glossary.

The remainder of the sociological literature on the carnival is sparse, scattered, somewhat dated, and highly introductory in focus. The most useful literature is offered by Easto and Truzzi (1973), in an article entitled “*Towards an Ethnography of the Carnival System*”, to which I refer in the previous section. As carnival participant-observers, Easto and Truzzi provide valuable insights into the carnival culture, and urge further sociological inquiry, but with little guidance other than the necessity for the researcher to dig deeply into the carnival culture in order to uncover the well-hidden elements that truly define the carnival experience. They “introduce the carnival to the social scientist” (Easto and Truzzi 1973:551) by explicating the carnival’s complex work and social structure, pointing out the features of the carnival culture that “future ethnographers will have to carefully

consider if they wish to gain entry into the private world of the carnival and if they do not wish to be misled by their informants" (Easto and Truzzi 1973:564).

Both despite and because of the age of this piece of literature, the value to my research project is that it shows that very little has changed in the carnival culture since the early 1970's — indicating the endurance and tenacity to its structure and social relations. The drawback, however, is that the article offers no theoretical guidance or explanations, other than to argue that the carnival is an example of what Goffman (1961) calls a total institution, which is an institution that is characterized by barriers to the outside world and, likewise, from the inhabitants in interacting with that outside world.

As this thesis will argue, however, the carnival is not as insulated as many of these earlier social scientists insist. In fact, many of the practices and behaviours of the carnival workers are a direct response to the outside world, both before and during their time in the carnival. What does remain constant, however, are the manifestations of that interaction, which is actually a form of "cultural penetration" (Willis 1977:185), or ways of simultaneously resisting and accommodating the more mainstream cultural norms of that outside world. An important point that Easto and Truzzi do make is that the only way that the social scientist can gain entry into the carnival, and therefore be able to tell when they are being "misled by their informants" (Easto and Truzzi 1973:564) is to become a carny, which means being totally accepted by the other carnival inhabitants. In Chapter Three, I provide evidence of my claim of ethnographic adequacy (Stoddart 1986), acquired largely through being privileged with complete acceptance by the majority of the carnival

workers.

Bryant's (1972) article, entitled "*Sawdust in Their Shoes: The Carnival as a Neglected Complex Organization and Work Culture*" presents a structural description similar to that offered by Easto and Truzzi, but, again, no theoretical rigor or direction, and ends with a plea to the "sociological researcher to 'get sawdust in his [sic] shoes' [in order to examine the]...'near-community', a social group with intense solidarity, and a highly distinctive subculture" (Bryant 1972:197).

Similarly, Theodore Dembroski in "*Hanky Panks and Group Games versus Alibis and Flats: The Legitimate and Illegitimate of the Carnival's Front End*³¹" (1973) corroborates Easto and Truzzi's (1973) structural account of the carnival, but also offers only a "descriptive overview of one major segment of the carnival, the front-end" (Dembroski 1973:582) and calls for further in-depth sociological study of the carnival, as "a mobile social system and unique subculture" (ibid.).

Beyond these articles, the remainder of the sociological literature is scant and diverse. The only theoretical attempts at understanding the carnival are found in David Gross' (1978) "*Culture and Negativity: Notes Towards a Theory of the Carnival*", but the focus of the article is on the relationship that the carnival has to the larger community — the 'deviant' aspects of the carnival culture and their role in satisfying the larger culture's need to rebel against greater societal norms from a Foucauldian analysis of madness.

There are only two other pieces of literature that contribute to this thesis in

³¹See glossary for definitions of these terms.

their illumination of the experiences of being a carnival worker. In *"Enlarging Life Through Miniatures: Bill Austin's Roadside Carnival"* (1992), Joanne Raetz Stuttgart offers a brief case study of a retired carnival ride worker and his post-retirement project of building miniature carnivals. Within the article, Stuttgart offers brief, verbatim quotations from Austin about his life as a carnival ride operator and electrician, arguing that making the miniature rides enables him to disengage from the "intimate social arena of the carnival work world" (Stuttgart 1992:304), adding to an understanding of the unique social complexities of the carnival culture. Unfortunately, Stuttgart largely romanticizes Austin's carnival experiences, deeming them to be "amazing feats" (Stuttgart 1992:306), such as Austin's driving "all night after a full day and evening of work to retrieve a replacement motor for a burned out ferris wheel" (Stuttgart 1992:306). I found that this was a frequent and highly-expected job duty for the carnival drivers and mechanics and, in fact, such a protracted work day and night was the experience of nearly all carnival workers. Stuttgart offers no sociological analysis of this work expectation nor of the workers' responses to these inhumane working conditions, other than to re-state the framework of heroism in which Austin recalls his days of being a carry.

Another glimpse into the lived experiences of carnival workers is found in Hazel Elves' (1977) *It's All Done With Mirrors: A Story of Canadian Carnival Life* — the only piece of literature that I located on the Canadian carnival experience. It is an autobiographical account of Elves' life as a carnival worker, but may have little scholarly relevance as it is a strictly personal account, although it does relate "a story of the people, the illusions and the fun of carnival life told by a woman who has

experienced it first hand" (Elves 1977:back cover).

Case Studies

As so little current sociological literature exists on the carnival, the theoretical literature that informed the research project itself was broadly inclusive of the areas of inquiry that were the focus of the research. The areas of inquiry were the social and economic relations of work, with an inclusion of gender, race and class of the workers and their work. The methodology is ethnographic in design and intent and was guided by the feminist research principle that, by definition, "is critical of mainstream research both because it is based on assumptions which often support and legitimate particular political and social interests, and also because it ignores many areas of experience" (Kirby and McKenna 1989:22).

Because there are no in-depth cases studies, ethnographic or otherwise, on carnivals in Canada (and very few of any real value in the United States), I drew upon ethnographic case studies that examine particular working-class cultures that include gender, race and class as elements of those cultures. The study most salient to this thesis is Paul Willis' (1977) Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs. In this groundbreaking study, Willis breaks from the traditional view of the working class as a deviant off-shoot of the more acceptable middle class stratum and, instead, shows, through lengthy participant-observation research of British white male working class boys and young men, how the conditions and experiences of the public school system shape the boys' views of authority and mainstream expectations of them into attitudes that, more or less, predestine them to perform manual labour that both reinforces their rebellion against

the status quo and, at the same time, allows them the tools to extract and manipulate aspects of the middle class culture to their advantage. In fact, Willis' central question is very similar to the one asked by this thesis: Why do these young males do such meaningless manual jobs (Willis 1977:1)? His explanation is, also, similar to the findings of this research project. It is the "contradictory complex of masculinity and the strange articulations of sexual and labour divisions" (Willis 1977:152) that, in fact, make so-called 'meaningless' jobs extremely meaningful to those who do them.

While it might be argued that a study that focuses on a white male British working class culture has little relevance to a Western Canadian carnival, I did locate much evidence supporting the arguments that Willis makes regarding the societal conditions necessary to produce males that seek the kind of manual work that many people would rather avoid. The most useful aspect of Willis' study, however, is his immense contribution to the significance of masculinities in the formation and maintenance of a working class culture. As I will demonstrate, masculinities in the carnival are a defining feature of the way that work is done, as well as the way that workers perceive their work and their relationships.

Two Canadian studies also inform this research project. Ester Reiter's (1992) *Making Fast Food: From the Frying Pan into the Fryer* is a participant-observation case study of work in a Burger King Restaurant. While Reiter makes an important contribution to the literature on working class jobs, the study lacks a strong focus on the workers (other than Reiter herself) and their personal experiences of working in a fast-food restaurant. Another gap in this study that might have added to working

class literature (like Willis' above) is that Reiter does not examine the various ways that workers gain informal control of the work process through humour, language and perhaps even creatively 'playing' with customers³². However, the study does offer valuable data on the relentlessness and monotony of many manual labour jobs, as well as the relations of exploitation that underpin the success of many businesses that rely on the manual labour of often disadvantaged workers.

The other Canadian case study that has many applications towards this study of the carnival is Thomas Dunk's (1991) *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture in Northwestern Ontario*. In his ethnographic study of young working-class white males in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Dunk chooses as the locale for study such informal settings as a ball game, a bar and other social settings where the group, all friends (including Dunk), interacted. Like Willis (1977), Dunk argues that working-class males deliberately make sense of their world by creating meanings that resist what they perceive to be the dominant culture. The contribution of Dunk's writing to this research project is that he corroborates most of Willis' claims about working class male culture, showing not only the resilience of the culture over time, but also over space: While Willis' study takes place in Great Britain in 1977, Dunk's research was conducted in Canada in the late 1980's. Dunk's work then bridges the necessary geographical and temporal gaps to add validity and currency to Willis' case study.

³²Although it could be the case, of course, that the intense scrutiny from management under which the workers operate, and the constant threat of being fired for not adhering to the strict company policies, may prevent such informality and 'play'.

I also refer to Beverley Skeggs' (1997) Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable, another case study of working class culture, wherein Skeggs studies a group of British working class women to investigate the intersections of class, gender, femininity and the politics of caring. Her main analytical tool is respectability which contains aspects and assessments (towards both self and other) of these intersections. Willis, Dunk, Skeggs and others equally emphasize the relationship that mediates perceptions that working-class people have of themselves vis-à-vis their perceptions of what constitutes middle class status and respect, and the salience of gender to those constructions.

A key finding of the studies conducted by Skeggs, Dunk and Willis is the significance of gender, particularly masculinity, in the working class culture that is informed and created by dynamics of experience and response which are accommodations to the difficult conditions and social relationships of manual work.

Masculinity

To explore more fully the degree to which masculinities inform working class culture, I looked primarily to the work of Bob Connell, particularly Gender and Power (1987) and Masculinities (1995), as Connell offers the most comprehensive analysis of both past and current ideas of what it means to be male, the various forms of masculinity, and the profound implications of those forms on the construction and perpetuation of working class cultures. Of the utmost importance in the salience of masculinity to manual work is what Connell refers to as hegemonic masculinity, a term that Connell borrows from Gramsci's analysis of class relations.

Rather like Weber's model of ideal types, hegemonic masculinity is a somewhat abstract concept of heterosexual masculinity that is composed of idealized characteristics. However, where Weber points out that rarely, if ever, does an ideal type actually exist, forms of hegemonic masculinity can, in fact, be found, albeit in created or fictionalized forms of heterosexual male cultural heroes (e.g. Arnold Schwarzenegger-type film and television roles; male rock and sports stars). In other words, hegemonic masculinity pre-supposes a particular form of masculinity which many heterosexual men aspire to emulate: a relentless yet ultimately impossible goal for most men to achieve, and especially predominant in the working class culture with its emphasis on the body as the tool for expressiveness in both work and social life.

Although much of the carnival research is bound by the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, embodied in the mostly male participants in the carnival culture, most of the women in the carnival are equally affected by, and respond to, the masculinist dynamics. As Skeggs states, "Femininity becomes the ultimate legitimator of masculinity....[as] it offers to masculinity the power to impose standards, make evaluations and confirm validity" (Skeggs 1997:112). I found, not surprisingly, that none of the women were overtly aware of their role in maintaining or legitimizing a particular form of masculinity amongst the male carnival workers. Nonetheless, it became clear that a particular type of femininity practiced by many of the working class women was clearly constructed in response to the expectations of the males and their attempts to achieve hegemonic masculine success. In other words, working class femininity is constructed around a certain image of the way a woman

should be and should act in relation to the men around her. I found this to be particularly pronounced in the carnival culture amongst many of the young female workers for whom the carnival work was quite obviously secondary to the pursuit (or maintenance) of a male carnival worker's affections.

Ironically, many of the older, more 'seasoned' female carnival workers themselves also 'did masculinity': they found that survival in the carnival culture was best attained by adopting and adapting many of the masculine characteristics of toughness and superiority. None of the literature on masculinity mentions this very important aspect of gender — that women can, and do, practice both masculinities and femininities — although there is an abundance of discussion on the various types of masculinities, including the variety of homosexual masculinities, many of which do include aspects of femininity. Only Cheng (1996) mentions that "masculinity can be and is performed by women" (Cheng 1996:xiii), and Kanter (1977) also implies that many successful female managers achieve their corporate success through adopting masculine behaviours and practices, although she does not explicitly characterize it as such. One of the contributions, consequently, of this research is to add to the sparse literature on the practice of masculinities by women. Chapter Ten shows the various forms of femininities and masculinities performed by female carnival employees that, variously, reinforce their dependence on the male carnival workers or sustain their positions of independence and power within the carnival hierarchy.

Another element that I bring in to explain the carnival culture is that of paternalism which fits well with masculinist explanations of power and control, and

which also helps to illuminate the symbiotic nature of many of the power relationships. It was during my early observations of the carnival that I first noticed that many of the relationships between those in power in the carnival (the 'royalty') and the workers were based on relations of reciprocity which at first appeared to be arbitrary. In fact, before I realized that there was reciprocity involved, I was quite mystified that some workers were selected to receive preferential treatment by the owners. But as I delved deeper into the culture, I realized that one of the key features of the carnival, at all levels and in a multitude of forms, is the unwritten rule that nobody does anything for purely altruistic reasons. I then began to search for a pattern to the ostensible benevolence and concluded that certain employees were deemed to be of particular use to the carnival owners, for a variety of reasons. These employees, then, were treated in ways quite differently than the more expendable workers in terms of receiving perks in the form of clothing or bedding, or even a few precious hours off -- clear evidence of paternalistic relations.

In an article entitled "*Intersections of Gender and Class: Accommodation and Resistance to Working-Class and Affluent Females to Contradictory Sex Role Ideologies*", Jean Anyon (1984) argues that a particular form of femininity practiced by women that exudes submissiveness and dependence (on men) fits in with the ideology of paternalism. Anyon refers to the work of Eugene Genovese (1974) who uses paternalism to explain the social relations of slavery in the southern United States: Genovese argues that far from seeing themselves as victims, the majority of slaves manipulated the slave-owners to their advantage by performing duties that would ensure better and more humane treatment. Anyon argues that many women

also deliberately occupy a submissive role, that involves both accommodation and resistance, in order to survive and, in fact, attain both the protection of men and the reciprocal relations with men to survive in an otherwise unequal relationship (Anyon 1984:31-34). In the carnival, I observed many such relationships, not just between women and men, but between men and other men, and, very occasionally, between women and other women. In Chapter Six, I more fully examine and explore the issue of masculinity, placing the analysis within a feminist framework that accommodates the multiplicities of both masculinities and femininities, as well as the intersections between such concepts.

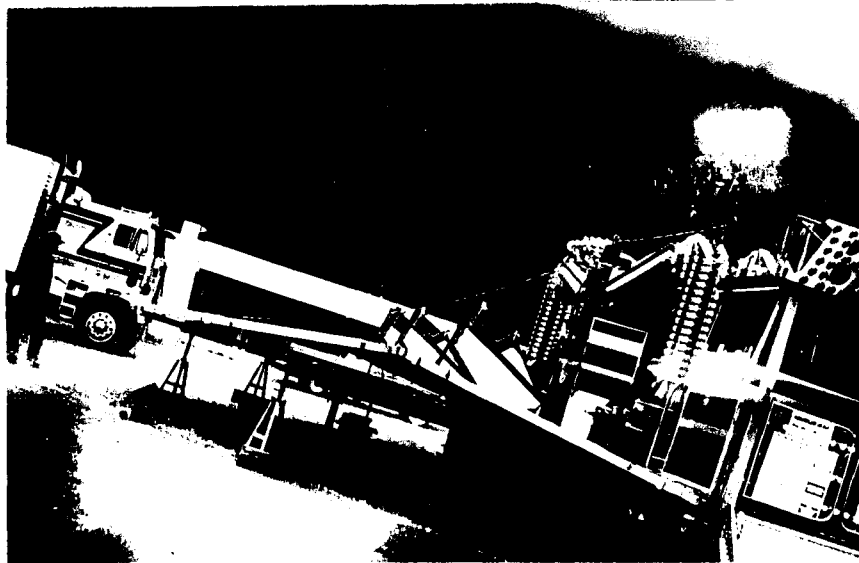
Conclusion

A strength of this thesis is the contribution it makes towards adding further empirical evidence to theories of work and gender that underscore the salience of masculinity as an organizing element in working class cultures. Moreover, this thesis will help to fill the empty space in social science literature, and social history in general, that exists due to the lack of studies on Canadian carnivals. (I do need to acknowledge that there are some European studies of carnivals and also studies on gypsy and traveller communities, but I found that the cultural specificity and uniqueness of carnivals and their traditions rendered most of this literature outside the parameters of this particular research project.) As I point out in Chapter Eleven, carnivals in North America seem to be in a state of transition, as efforts to modernize and legitimize their practices are underway. It may be the case that Sullivan Amusements will also be forced, by economics and monitoring by government authorities, to upgrade its work standards and conditions, thereby

relegating many of the practices that currently exist to the past. While they do still exist, therefore, it is crucial to both history and social science that they be recorded and analyzed.



Tommy, a veteran White ride guy, in his tear-down clothes,
in front of the carnival office



Finishing tear-down of a carnival ride in rare daylight conditions

Chapter 3

Getting Loked and Setting Up: Methodological Considerations

Something I've noticed all along ever since I became associated with the carnival: there is an assumption that you know who everybody is and what their association with the carnival is, i.e. who their boss is, who they associate with personally and everybody's known by their first name and I, of course, who have a hard time remembering names at the best of times, have difficulty making these connections... I am now starting to fit the pieces of the puzzle together. It's almost like being given a giant jigsaw puzzle in bits and you pick up a bit and you know it's connected with another bit but you really don't know where it belongs, like a big old piece of blue sky. Well, I'm starting to fit the pieces together. I'm just watching, observing. The working relationships, the sort of business end of things, these sort of associations, there are all kinds of partnerships and who owns what and then they split and they come and they go and about the only really solidly core group is the Sullivan ride people but even among the ride guys every once in a while they'll just drift off, they'll just go off for a couple of weeks, they'll get pissed off or temporarily fired and go and work for [another carnival]. Anyway I'm starting to put some of the puzzle pieces together. Hopefully by the end of this gig the jigsaw puzzle will be complete (Personal Notes 3-19).

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I defend my decision for avoiding a rigid theoretical starting point for the research on the grounds that (a) no similar research literature existed that could offer me any relevant paradigmatic frameworks, and that (b) I chose not to limit myself theoretically in order to acquire as much data as possible about the carnival's social life and relations.

To further support my choice to enter the field unfettered by pre-determined theory, I offer the following arguments by John Van Maanen, as the choice of whether or not to wade into the research domain girded by theory has clear implications for one's research methodology. In *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (1988), Van Maanen begins his chapter entitled "Confessional Tales"

with a quotation from Clifford Geertz who endorses the tenet that the ethnographer prioritize the social action initially over and above setting the theoretical boundaries for the research:

If you want to understand what a science is you should look in the first instance not at its theories or its findings, and certainly not what its apologists say about it; you should look at what the practitioners of it do (Geertz [book/article source not stated] in Van Maanen 1988:73).

From this beginning, Van Maanen works through the dilemma of the ethnographer's presence and subjectivity when conducting research. Initially in the chapter, he argues persuasively that the researcher needs to find the right balance between "introspection and objectification" (Van Maanen 1988:93) in order to avoid what he terms "vanity ethnography" (ibid), whereby the researcher's account is little more than a self-indulgent and narcissistic exercise in telling tales of personal bravado in the field. He supports his arguments by referring to the dangers inherent in interpreting data in ways that can leave the ethnographer wide open to criticism from the academy that the account is simply too subjective to have any real scholarly value.

There is no question that, if the researcher focuses only on their own reactions to the social environment, the outcome does run the risk of being little more than a journalistic account that is simply unworthy of (and, indeed, entirely incompatible with) the project of advancing knowledge that would be useful for future researchers who might want to replicate the study in some form or another. On the other hand, it is my contention that to aim for complete objectification of one's research subjects and environment automatically and invariably renders the

researcher invisible: an equally unethical methodological faux pas.

As Van Maanen works his way through his chapter on "*Confessional Tales*" he does eventually arrive at what he deems to be the necessary compromise, or balance, that does involve moving away from a desire for a conventional "objectified" stance³³. He refers to:

...a minimally acceptable table of contents for an account of fieldwork. Authors must discuss their pre-understandings of the studied scene as well as their own interests on that scene; their modes of entry, sustained participation or presence, and exit procedures; the responses of others on the scene to their presence (and vice versa); the nature of their relationship with various categories of informants; and their modes of data collection, storage, retrieval, and analysis (Van Maanen 1988:93-94).

I can claim that I followed Van Maanen's "table of contents"; in addition, however, I did include what he might criticize as an "outward-bound, lone-wolf, muddy-boots image" (Van Maanen 1988:74). To present myself in any other form would have been dishonest: indeed, I was outward bound, very often a lone wolf, and wore decidedly muddy boots almost every day/night. Van Maanen's main point, as I understand it, is that a degree of subjectivity in the form of the researcher allowing themselves to be as much the researched as the researcher, is allowable. But beyond that, the researcher risks falling into the trap of becoming a self-absorbed non-fiction writer. On this last point, I strongly disagree with Van Maanen. It was not only necessary that I record my own feelings, experiences and self-

³³It is often difficult to follow Van Maanen's arguments — the humorous style he uses can often be mistaken for sarcasm. His meandering style, in fact, falls prey to some of the very pitfalls he himself points out in some ethnographies: a very interesting read with often inconclusive results.

reflections as both researcher and worker. It was, I would argue, vital to the research project itself. Had I been conducting the research from the comfort of a fifth-wheel trailer, or commuting back and forth between the carnival site and a warm and dry hotel, then it might not have been as necessary for me to include my own experiences. But I lived as a carnival worker (not a member of the "royalty") and, as such, I was more than an observer of the carnival experience -- I shared precisely the same experiences within the carnival setting as the other workers. The only activities that I chose not to engage in were the nightly consumption of large amounts of beer and drugs, and the high degree of sexual activity. I made those decisions not on moral grounds, but because I rarely overindulge in alcohol, avoid all drugs and do not engage in casual sexual relations for health reasons. Secondly, I knew that in order to stay healthy while living and working in such conditions, it was paramount that I maintain as healthy a lifestyle as possible.

As I have shown above, the reasons behind my selected research methodology were largely based on keeping myself (as both researcher and researched) and my subjects very much alive. I also made the choice based on the people that I was researching: people living on the margins who had been for the most part ignored by the academic world.

Methodological Concerns:

Kirby and McKenna (1989) present a convincing argument for researching people and social situations in the margins, meaning groups of people and social locations that are largely ignored by the academic community and status quo society in general. They suggest that usually interest in such groups arises out of "a

concern that is rooted in experience" (Kirby and McKenna 1989:44).

It was my experience of working in the carnival that gave rise to my research interest. My interest developed not because of a romanticized delight in 'discovering' such an admittedly fascinating and complex social domain, but it arose out of a sense of moral outrage at the conditions to which the workers were subjected, and how the workers were able to sustain the level of labour that they did under such conditions. Lest my declaration of anger be criticized as unscholarly, it is necessary to point out that Kirby and McKenna posit that:

A sense of outrage and anger can be enabling in doing research. While status quo researchers may describe the social world as an interesting thing to study, people on the margins often have a compelling need to do research because they find the status quo so outrageous, inequitable and unsatisfying (Kirby and McKenna 1989:35).

My mystified anger at these conditions falls under the category of conceptual baggage, which is "the record of the experience and reflections of the researcher that relate to the focus of the research" (Kirby and McKenna 1989:49). Conceptual baggage consists of thoughts, therefore, that inform the research question but also the recurring thinking and "emotional comments" that happen to the researcher while he/she is conducting the research (Kirby and McKenna 1989:49), which serve the purpose of 'intellectualizing' the data as one comes across it. Kirby and McKenna argue that this conceptual baggage must be included in the research data as it is a way to keep "your own experience and process observable and accounted for in the investigation" (Kirby and McKenna 1989:51).

A significant part of the researcher's conceptual baggage is his or her personal background. Kirby and McKenna urge the researcher to "not be afraid to

incorporate yourself, your emotions and your experience into the research process” (Kirby and McKenna 1989:123). As an integral part of an ethnographic research project from the margins is the inclusion of the researcher as a live, active and activating member of the entire process, it is important that I provide some autobiographic details. And as I was also a worker in the carnival, these personal facts have a bearing on how I perceived the carnival culture and, equally, how the members of the carnival culture evaluated me.

I am a divorced white heterosexual female with two sons, and was forty-seven years old at the time of the research. My family background can be characterized as middle-class: my parents are British and university-educated. As I noted in Chapter One, I worked as a secretary for nearly twenty years in a variety of working- and middle-class businesses, and travelled extensively in Europe, Britain and North America. I have always had a strong respect for what I perceived as the honesty and the common-sense of the working-class, especially in terms of the way that life’s difficulties are understood. In fact, I still consider myself to be working-class. I deliberately rejected my family’s middle-class elitism, as I saw it, at an early age. In my mid-thirties, post-divorce, I went to university (out of economic necessity, not wanting to raise two children alone on a secretary’s wages), and surprised myself by succeeding to the extent that I was encouraged by university faculty to do graduate degrees. This rather varied past has served me well in my university work, and I found it very easy to slip into the parlance and culture of the carnival. Much of the carnival culture is no different than the culture of, for example, a working-class bar or other social meeting place. I know how to banter and come up with the “one-

liner" responses, and I am not shocked by male flirtatious behaviour. I rarely needed to express any anger when flirtatious behaviour went beyond my limits of acceptability. There were only three occasions where my personal boundaries were crossed, and I dealt with it as I would in any such situation, by asserting my feelings, and demanding (and receiving) an apology.

My background of an unsuccessful (and abusive) marriage left me with a profound understanding of the effects of domestic violence; having two children has made me privy to the pains and the joys of child-rearing. Economically forced to spend a year living on Social Assistance after my marriage ended, I also have experienced profound poverty and all the emotional stresses attached thereto. All of these factors were key to my being able to understand the words, emotions and behaviours of many of the carnival participants, especially many of the female workers. In sum, my ability to understand the workers, and the outrage at the inequities that I felt when I first observed the carnival workers and, later, several times during my time with the carnival, are rooted in my own experiences of feeling marginalized, devalued and, occasionally, exploited by those in positions of power.

The carnival presents a unique and challenging task for the social scientist who wants to do it the honest and sociological justice that it well deserves. The immediate problem presented to me, as the researcher, was that I chose the challenging task of investigating heretofore largely unexplored social territory. It would probably be fair to say that there are very few social domains in the Western world that have not been the object/subject of sociological scrutiny in one form or another over the past few decades. Sociologists frequently choose a subject that

has already been examined by others: a major objective of these studies, then, is to refute or validate prior explanations for the inhabitants' behaviour. There is some practical merit in this. The social scientist can begin with someone else's map, as it were, and follow the directions, or the maze, to find out if they, too, end up at the same theoretical finishing point, or if they are able to provide refuting evidence and, therefore, alternative pathways, to that finishing post.

As I explain in Chapter Two, I had no such map, flawed or otherwise, to follow or transgress, other than the very brief, largely descriptive, and 'instruction-free' literature written over twenty-five years ago by Bryant (1972) and Easto and Truzzi (1973) that certainly urged the sociologist to investigate the carnival culture, but offered no strong theoretical arguments to guide one in such an endeavour. It was, consequently, very much like deciding to visit a country without a map in terms of the foci of the research: I knew what I wanted to do in a large and generalized sense — to explore the social and economic relations of the carnival. But beyond that, I had no clear ideas, primarily because I did not know, at the beginning, exactly what patterns would emerge.

Loosely, I intended to conduct the research in a methodological manner similar to that done by Ester Reiter (1991) in *Making Fast Food: From the Frying Pan Into the Fryer*. In this study, Reiter investigated, as a worker-participant/observer, the everyday experiences of working in a Burger King fast-food restaurant. In her introduction, Reiter claims that:

Theories about what happens at work and why workers behave as they do have, until very recently, treated the worker as a uniform creature of no particular gender or race. However, it was assumed that this ungendered,

raceless worker was really an adult white male, settled in a factory where he could expect to remain for long stretches of time with some job security, and where, if lucky, he would move up the ladder a few rungs (Reiter 1991:4-5; see also Livingstone and Mangan 1996:9).

Given that carnival workers are both male and female, and are engaged in highly unsettled and mobile work with little job security and few opportunities for advancement, it quickly became doubtful to me that much of the conventional labour theory would be applicable.

This research project clearly was, to borrow from Kirby and McKenna (1989), research from the margins, in every possible sense of the phrase. I was researching a very marginalized social community, with equally marginalized people occupying it³⁴. And I, myself, was somewhat marginalized within that community. It is important to point out, though, that my marginalized condition within the carnival culture was a very deliberate placement on my part: most of the carnival workers saw me as a carnival worker first and a sociologist second.

Because the carnival is an area that has had little sociological scrutiny, it was important that I establish, as much as possible, a high degree of "ethnographic adequacy" (Stoddart 1986:105) to the research project, in order to make the thesis scientifically acceptable to the academic community. As I strongly believe that the importance of ethnographic adequacy cannot be overstated, I will itemize the properties of adequacy that Stoddart (1986:105) suggests as key criteria towards establishing such adequacy, and offer evidence of my commitment to those rules:

³⁴I also had several personal experiences with members of the outside (mainstream) communities who saw me only as a carny, treating me with disrespect, which I explain in Chapter Six.

1. An adequate ethnography describes the milieu being explored in its distinctive form outside the ethnographer's presence. In Chapter Four, I describe, in detail, the physical details of the carnival upon which this research is based. Because I first entered the carnival solely as a worker and remained at that status for the first four months, my presence in the carnival continued to be seen as primarily a worker. I did, however, jot down observed data unobtrusively during this pre-research period which arose mostly from my own 'conceptual baggage' (Kirby and McKenna 1989:21). I also asked many questions in order to try to understand some of the confusing behaviour that I observed, but this would be a normal practice of any neophyte worker in a new job.
2. Adequacy is also attained by describing the milieu as its occupants perceive it, thereby avoiding ethnocentrism. I accomplish this by clearly distinguishing, in my findings, between my voice as observer/participant/analyst, and the voices of the people with whom I spoke. As much as possible, I use their words, rather than paraphrase and run the risk of invoking my own voice (and life experiences). Often, the words of the participants, in fact, convey the feeling of the carnival much better, and much more honestly and adequately, than any words or phrases that I might use, especially if those words were converted into the sociological jargon common to many research projects that may, indeed, accrue academic 'brownie' points to the researcher, but do a vast disservice to the original speakers, not to mention the inevitable elitism that accompanies such language. As well, because I conducted the research

with a very broad research question — How and why do people work in these kinds of difficult and demanding jobs? — I was not actively searching out only particular data that could support a pre-existing hypothesis. I had no concrete answer to the question until after I emerged from the domain and was able to fully reflect on the culture.

3. Adequacy is also established by the researcher not modifying the milieu in any way by the method that data is gathered. Despite the carnival being an extremely difficult domain in which to gather data, I was very committed to modifying my techniques according to the situation at hand, rather than forcing changes in the milieu for my convenience³⁵. It was almost impossible to follow the conventional interview method of setting up times and locations in advance, as carnival workers were expected to be available for work at all times. Rather than trying to force or coerce people into concrete interview commitments ahead of time, I chose to carry with me, at all times, all my interview paraphernalia (permission and consent letters, tapes, and tape

³⁵My first attempt at an interview was a disaster which, fortunately, I managed to turn into a learning experience: I selected a young female with whom I had worked in the ticket box earlier in the season and who was now a "floss chick" (worked in a candyfloss joint). She was always very outgoing and chatty when we worked together, so I assumed she would readily consent to be my first "interviewee". She adamantly refused, looking horrified, and strode away. I waited another day and then decided to approach her and ask her why she declined to be interviewed as I felt the information might help me in subsequent attempts at interviews. She told me that it was the word "interview" that terrified her: her only previous experiences with interviews had been with social workers and (unsuccessful) attempts to find work. I stored this information away and used it for my next intended subject. Instead of asking if I could "interview" him, I asked him if he would agree to talk to me about his experiences in the carnival, to which he readily agreed. I basically continued this method of approach for the next few weeks until word got around the carnival that these "talks" were a really positive experience for the subjects. In fact, many carnival workers approached me asking to be interviewed about one month into the research.

recorder) so that I was always prepared to conduct interviews at the convenience of the participants. Similarly, the interview locations were mostly far from ideal: no cosy, quiet, warm offices were available in the carnival, so interviews were conducted in a variety of locations — beside my tent, in the ticket box, in bars, in coffee shops, in the cabs of semi-trailer trucks, in the Pie Car³⁶ and even at the very work-place of the participant. Occasionally, a single interview was conducted over several days, in deference to the participant's work and life demands.

Stoddart also cautions the ethnographer to be aware of the chance “that techniques of gathering data may create data gathered” (1986:106). In

³⁶The Pie Car was a converted truck trailer that served as a bar, restaurant, place for gambling (poker games attended only by select carnival royalty males, and Video Lottery Terminals) and general socializing, for carnival workers only. The Pie Car also sold condoms and cigarettes (at 50 cents apiece for the latter; I never bought any of the former!). The inside walls were covered in jokes and notices from the bosses that nobody paid any attention to. There was a blackboard that announced the day's “food specials” (always the same menu -- it never changed in the eight months I was with the show), and the next day's lot call time. Totally unrecognizable by anybody other than the carnival cognoscenti, it was always tucked away deep inside the conglomeration of carnival trucks at a lot, completely undetectable by the general public (and authorities). Totally illegal, it held no liquor, food or gambling licences. I learned that it was a vestige of the old carnival structure and that, originally, Pie Cars were just that: places that sold pies to carnies. Pie Cars are now largely a thing of the past in most American carnivals (according to the Lot Superintendent at the North Dakota carnival). The Pie Car at Sullivan Amusements, owned by Fred and Christine, stayed open as late as Fred and Christine chose, selling beer at two for \$5, and a very limited (and highly unsanitary) menu of food. Many of the veteran carnival workers warned me never to eat in the Pie Car as trips to local hospitals with food poisoning were frequent after partaking of their food. The royalty were allowed to drink liquor there any time they wished, but carnival workers could only drink when the show was closed. It is intriguing that none of the older carnival research literature (e.g. Easto and Truzzi 1973) mentions a Pie Car, although many long-time carnival workers at Sullivan Amusements as well as the North Dakota Lot Superintendent told me that they were a fixture in carnivals for decades, going back to the late 19th century. My reading of this absence in the literature is that it may indicate that the researchers did not (or were not permitted to) delve as deeply into the carnival culture as I was privileged to do.

some circumstances, this was indeed the case. I will provide two examples and explain what I did to accommodate it. I took many photographs during my eight months with the carnival. It was almost impossible to take the photographs unobserved and, in fact, I preferred to be observed by the people being photographed for ethical reasons. Occasionally, participants would yell "Don't take my picture!" I would dutifully comply, and apologize for any offence that I might have caused them. In addition, many of the photographs were of the workers doing their work. One of the elements of protest masculinity is the pride that the practitioners have in the physical element of their manual work. Most of the carnival workers loved to be photographed and, many times, as I roamed around the lot during the work-day (on one of my breaks), or during teardown or setup, the workers would call to me to photograph them. Although one could say that these were far from candid photographs, I would instead argue that they are pictorial records of masculinity 'in action' — the preening and flexing of their bodies, the clear and obvious pride on their faces as they lugged about heavy pieces of equipment, are examples of that pride, an inherent part of protest masculinity. The second example concerns my tape recording of data. I never hid my tape recording, at any time, for the practical reason that it was nearly impossible to do so. Also, if I wanted — and I did — to record observations as I saw them, rather than in recollections later, it was necessary that I stroll around and chatter into the recorder as I walked. I cannot state with any certainty that this did not influence the way the participants behaved, but

because I was so totally accepted by the workers in the carnival, it was not long into the research (about two weeks) that people either ignored the tape recorder 'glued' to my mouth, or, in fact, voluntarily became actively involved in it, yelling at me and engaging me in conversations as I walked around. Again, I would argue that this is further evidence of the workers' need to be heard and their thirst for recognition and respect. Occasionally, a worker would ask, with curiosity, "What are you saying into that thing?" Instead of muttering something about the confidentiality of the research data, I would always cheerfully play back a few minutes of what I had just recorded, in order to ensure the continued good rapport and trust that I had with the participants. As already mentioned, trust is a very important criterion for acceptance in the carnival, and the trust that was given to me, and by me to others, not only came out of my status as a carnival worker but equally as my more marginal status as researcher. I therefore hid nothing from the participants, other than the whispered 'conceptual baggage' or more sensitive, often 'dirty', data³⁷ that I observed or was told about, that I would enter into the recorder, usually late at night in my tent after my shift finished,

³⁷When I was transcribing my data, these transmissions often came across as truly strange: Because my tent was often pitched amongst other carnival workers who were mainly in motorhomes or 5th wheels, but occasionally in small tents, and also because many of the carnival workers passed by my tent, I would enter anything of a slightly sensitive nature into the recorder with a *sotto voce* whisper, which somehow made the more 'sinister' aspects of the carnival even more pronounced and gave them a very 'unsociological' aura of intrigue. Sometimes I would enter this data in the pitch-dark standing behind the joint-line with the same voice, and I recall feeling acutely frightened at the risk that someone was listening to me, especially when the rumours were abounding that I was an undercover police officer, which was another important reason why I did not hide the majority of my oral or photographic data collection.

or the data that I entered when I was on my own in the ticket box and during the jumps, when driving in my car, or when I spent the occasional day and night away from the carnival altogether (also on jumps).

4. Adequate ethnography is attained through gathering data from participants cognizant of the domain being researched. Every subject whom I interviewed, and observed, was a fully participating carnival worker³⁸, whose length of stay in the carnival ranged from a few weeks, to over forty years. This "differential distribution of competence" (Stoddart 1986:106) provided data that contained a variety of perceptions given by the workers, a critical dimension given that longevity within the carnival had a pronounced effect on the acceptance of, and by, the carnival culture on its members. It was very useful, therefore, to hear the often outraged opinions of carnival novices to their new 'home' and work environment, in stark contrast with those who had come to see the carnival culture and its unique unwritten rules of behaviour as somehow natural and unquestionable. Therefore, although the participants ranged enormously in their length of time in the carnival, rather than viewing this as a degree of competence (e.g. knowledge of the culture), I consider it rather to be a range in cultural immersion, and often those (like myself) who were relatively new to the culture were able to point out aspects that the more seasoned 'lifers' were now immune to or were no longer

³⁸The only exception to this was a man who had worked for Sullivan Amusements the year previous to my research, whom I befriended and who accompanied me when I spent a day at a large American carnival in North Dakota.

consciously aware of.

Another criterion of adequate ethnography is the presence of the researcher (Stoddart 1986:107) and the degree to which the ethnographer may or not have tainted the participants' behaviour and/or the research milieu in general. Stoddart offers six methods by which the ethnographer seeks some form of invisibility, and I employed all but the last — misrepresentation — in my research techniques (Stoddart 1986:109-112). Again, as I wish to establish myself as an adequate ethnographer to the academic community, I will outline Stoddart's variations and offer evidence to support my claims.

1. Disattending: erosion of visibility by time. This refers to the researcher becoming so familiar to the participants that he/she comes to be seen as no different than anyone else in the cultural domain. As previously mentioned, I began by being strictly a carnival worker, and was fully accepted by the other carnival workers in that role. Because of the unwritten carnival rule that people are judged on the way that they behave in the carnival, and no inquiries, formal or otherwise, are made into workers' backgrounds, the fact that I was a graduate student in sociology at the University of British Columbia did not arise. Although I certainly looked different from most of the workers, their acceptance of me was based on my ability to interact with them with humour and respect. I therefore had a distinct advantage in terms of disattendance. Even after my time with the carnival turned into primarily (for me) a research project, I continued to be seen as a worker first and foremost. I did have fears that the workers might treat me differently after they

discovered my 'other life', but I was able to explain to people individually what I was doing, in language that I knew they would understand³⁹. As the carnival owners had not passed on to the workers, including the other administrative people and foremen, that I was continuing with the carnival in order to conduct research, my re-arrival at the carnival was simply accepted as a normal occurrence, as workers frequently move in and out of the carnival, especially in the first few months of the season.

2. Disattending: erosion of visibility by display of no symbolic detachment. As mentioned in 1. above, I never even attempted any form of symbolic detachment, mainly because it would have been impossible under the circumstances of my ticket-selling work and the living arrangements. I made no attempt to hide what I was doing as a researcher, as to do otherwise would have certainly raised suspicions, destroyed the very important element of trust that I had managed to build, and would have sabotaged the entire research project. I soon shed my appearance of looking different, mainly because within a short time of travelling with the carnival, I was living and

³⁹Lest this be taken as an elitist declaration, I wish to clarify that speaking to someone with no experience with or knowledge of the academic world means using words and phrases common to their own knowledge base. This does not mean that one has to "talk down"; it means that one needs to respect that a difference exists. For example, the first time I was seen chattering into my tape recorder while sitting in the ticket box, a couple of the ride guys, who already knew me well, strolled over and asked what I was doing, out of sheer curiosity. I explained that I was a researcher from U.B.C. conducting research on the carnival. When they asked exactly what I was researching, I replied that I was interested in the whole carnival. I did not launch into sociological jargon about social inequality and work-related cultures. Satisfied with my answer, they reacted with great joy and appreciation that someone finally was paying attention to the carnival and the workers. For the most part, this was the reaction of all the workers.

working under the same difficult conditions as the other workers were (with the exception of the 'royalty' who lived in 5th wheel trailers and motorhomes with every modern convenience) which were characterized by no immediately accessible toilets or showers, ever-present dirt, and sheer exhaustion from the long hours. The act of sharing all of these experiences and, indeed, tolerating⁴⁰ them as the others did reinforced my membership in the group.

3. Disattending: erosion of visibility by display of symbolic attachment. Because of the high degree of membership that I already held with the carnival culture, I had to do very little to deliberately show my attachment. Even the language of the carnival workers did not present me with difficulties or force me into a pretense of any kind. My many years of 'membership' in working class culture have provided me with verbal and interactional skills and familiarity that allowed me to easily fit in with the carnival workers, who speak no differently than most other 'unskilled' labourers, other than using some words or phrases that are unique to the carnival culture. But by the time I was engaged in the research project, I was already familiar with the carnival language, so this also presented no difficulty to me.

4. Disattending: erosion of visibility by personalizing the ethnographer-informant

⁴⁰When I first re-joined the carnival to travel with it in July, I had a conversation with one of the wives of the 'independents' during which I explained that I was conducting sociological research and living in a small tent. She roared with laughter and said "You won't last long. You won't be able to take it. You university types are too soft for this kind of life". I replied that there was much more to me than simply a 'university type'. Towards the end of the season, three months later, she apologized for describing me as too weak to tolerate the carnival life, and told me how impressed she was at my tenacity.

relationship. By the time the formal stage of the research had begun, I had already established many friendships with carnival workers. And as a fully-accepted and fully-functioning member of the carnival workforce, I shared almost all aspects of the carnival with the other workers. Thus, for example, when I asked questions about their opinions on the living and working conditions of the carnival, I was able to offer my own opinions as well, after eliciting theirs. We all shared the same long hours, bad weather, and lack of showers and toilets. As well, many of the carnivals workers had children that were living with ex-partners or parents in their home towns and many of them voiced their sadness at not seeing their children. As I also have two children whom I did not see for several months, I was able to express my empathy. Finally, the other carnival workers saw me most mornings trudging in shorts and gumboots, as filthy and weary as they, to the often-distant showers in a cowbarn, which also served to personalize and, consequently, to disattend my role as researcher⁴¹.

5. Misrepresentation: masking the real research interests. My real research concerned the perceptions of the carnival workers to their work. To some degree, I camouflaged, rather than misrepresented, the real research interests. Whenever I was asked what exactly I was interested in, I would

⁴¹Another aid to my disattendance as researcher was a large scar that I have on my upper arm (from surgical removal of melanoma), which received many admiring glances from the carnies (both male and female). A male carny pointed to my scar early in the research and said "Shank, huh!". He looked most disappointed when I told him it was a surgical scar, and not a souvenir of an heroic experience of being shanked (stabbed).

always respond that I was simply researching the carnival in its entirety. If I was asked why, I would respond that I thought it was a fascinating place and worthy of being researched. I felt that if I was too precise, this knowledge might in fact have an effect on the way they conducted their work. I did attempt to give 'equal time' to all aspects of the carnival as, of course, a guiding principle of my research methodology was the inclusiveness of all areas of activity and behaviour.

6. Misrepresentation: masking identity as ethnographer. As previously mentioned, I never hid my identity as a researcher from anyone that I encountered during my time with the carnival. In fact, in one location, a television reporter began asking me questions about my work as a ticket seller and I included in my response that I was conducting research on the carnival. This subsequently developed into a five-minute segment on the CBC National News.

Two other criteria for ethnographic adequacy are suggested by Stoddart and concern the problems of methodogenesis and ethnocentrism (Stoddart 1986:113-117). Regarding methodogenesis, Stoddart cautions the researcher to utilize research methods that do not accidentally create the characteristics of a social milieu, instead of explaining or describing such elements. Stoddart mentions three techniques that can assist the researcher in avoiding this unethical (and, ultimately, dishonest) practice: neutralizing the techniques, which means minimizing the number of directed questions asked of subjects; invisibilizing the techniques, i.e. eliminating altogether any direct questions and relying solely on volunteered

information; and redundant demonstrations, which refers to gathering opinions on a single matter from a variety of participants, the argument being that if a sufficient number of people repeat the same or similar ideas, this increases the validity of the information (Stoddart 1986:116-117). In my interviews with the carnival workers, the only direct questions that I asked were concerned with demographic data (e.g. What is your birthdate? Where were you born?). The other questions, which were designed to access the participants' opinions on the more general aspects of the carnival culture, were much broader, to avoid creating possibly artificial or contrived responses. It was also the case, however, that some of the questions covered areas that many of the subjects had never reflected on. This could, possibly, be construed as evidence of the very data that Stoddart cautions against. However, it is my contention that as long as the questions are worded in an open-ended fashion, the subject is free to respond in any way that he or she sees fit, thereby avoiding any artificiality. Again, I would argue that the trust and affection which most of the carnival workers held for me aided tremendously in their being able or willing to answer such heretofore unasked questions honestly. The personal interviews also frequently went off on tangents that I encouraged, as it was these conversational meanderings which often produced the most fruitful and insightful data from the subjects.

Concerning the problem of ethnocentrism, Stoddart identifies the need to represent the social milieu from the perspective of the subjects, which can be attained by testing one's portrayal against that of the participants, to establish ethnographic adequacy (Stoddart 1986:113-114). Again, as a fellow carnival

worker, I experienced much the same conditions as the rest of the workers and, therefore, had my own opinions about particular aspects. By talking to other carnival workers and asking their opinions or comments on such aspects, I was able to 'double-check' my own perceptions as well as reinforce those perceptions. Stoddart also suggests the use of "native as talent judge" (Stoddart 1986:115), which refers to the researcher asking a subject for useful information on how to behave or dress in order to fit into the milieu. I developed several close friendships with carnival workers and frequently consulted them on behaviours or elements that I did not understand or did not mesh with my conceptual baggage. I needed this information not only for research clarity, but also to continue to survive in the carnival and not commit any unwitting behavioral faux pas.

Having ensured that I met all of Stoddart's suggestions for adequate ethnography, as detailed above, I feel confident that the data, and the interpretation thereof, are as valid and honest to the domain as possible. It is my strong contention that my unique position in the carnival — being seen as a worker first and a researcher second — lends immense validity to my findings, and the lucidity of the valuable knowledge given to me by the carnival worker participants.

Methodology:

My methodology was based on the need to find the right balance between organizing the research process so that it would provide a comprehensive and usable store of data, and keeping the process loose enough that it could capture as much of the various elements as possible, without distortion or over-selection. To accomplish this, I used a variety of methods, all of which Kirby and McKenna

recommend for a research project that examines groups from the margins and has the goal of accessing the relations of ruling that underscore an oppressed social group (Kirby and McKenna 1989:65). To collect nearly all the data, I used a hand-held tape recorder: the end result was 46 90-minute tapes. I started by writing down my observations in a notebook, but I quickly abandoned the book for practical reasons. It was often very dark or raining, and I needed to be able to record information immediately, while it was still fresh in my memory or as a significant event was occurring. I also found that the tape recorder was more accessible: when I was on the jumps, I usually chose this as a time for reflection on the previous carnival spot and would unload my conceptual baggage into the recorder as I drove. (It was also an excellent way to try to stay awake, an often arduous task after working for fourteen hours and then having to drive several hundred miles to the next carnival spot.)

I created a set of interview questions (Appendix C), with some assistance from my thesis supervisor, Dr. Gillian Creese, that were designed to capture some key demographic data (age, ethnicity, sex, education, work experience), as well as questions that framed my inquiries into the carnival participants' perceptions of and experiences with the carnival work and life. For the most part, I did not modify these questions in any way, but I did find that one question in particular very quickly became problematic. The question was "What kind of work does or did your father/mother do?" This may appear to be a relatively straight-forward question to be asking in an interview, but there is an underlying assumption that the interview subject has one set of parents and that they are the subject's biological parents. A

very frequent occurrence during the interviews was that this question resulted in, occasionally, up to an hour-long explanation of family background that was complex, sad and volatile. For most of the carnival workers, the only relatively stable parent in their lives was their mother. Some never knew their biological fathers at all, while many recited a list of various male partners that moved in and out of their mothers' lives, leaving behind other children and massive amounts of personal heartbreak for all the family members. Several of the workers were raised in foster homes or by grandparents, and for the majority of them, drugs, alcohol and physical violence were significant factors in the disintegration of the serial quasi-parental relationships.

Another question from which one might expect a relatively succinct and immediate response was: What kind of work do you expect to be doing five years from now? Most of my interview subjects reacted to this question with puzzlement quickly followed by "I don't know. I've never really thought about that." I always left the question hanging, as it were, thereby giving them the option to self-reflectively examine what their plans for the future might be. Many had no answer whatsoever, while others eventually responded, after much thought, with what they would *like* to be doing in five years (typical replies were social worker or probation officer) but with the added disclaimer that it would never happen anyway. In sum, then, I found that questions that appeared to be quite straight-forward provided information to me that helped me to understand the respondents' subjective understandings of their personal worlds, past, present and future, the last which they had rarely ever contemplated, which I found to be a significant factor in their rationales for the

difficult carnival work and conditions.

Just as Stoddart (1986) makes practical suggestions for the attainment of ethnographic adequacy by grappling with the issue of the 'objective researcher', so do Kirby and McKenna offer some optimum conditions for "quality interviewing" (1989:67) with a focus on the need for an equal relationship between the persons involved in the interview setting. Their suggestions include an ambience of informality and spontaneity to allow "space so the input of the research participants can help guide and shape the research interaction" (Kirby and McKenna 1989:67). Due to already well-established rapport and friendships with the carnival workers, I found that by about the third interview, I rarely had to consult my interview question sheet, and would largely allow the subject to speak freely in any direction that they wished to go.

Participant-observation was also used. I recorded my own perceptions as a worker, as well as observations that I made of the other workers. I often simply left my tape recorder on when several of us were in conversation (with the permission of those present) and was able to record some of the humour and sense-making that helped to sustain the carnival workers⁴².

⁴²A highly amusing experience that I had with a particular ride guy was his penchant for "talking to Gillian [Creese, my thesis supervisor]". This evolved out of an early conversation that I had with him when he asked who, besides me, would hear my tape-recordings. I replied "Nobody, with the possible exception of Gillian, my supervisor." From that point onwards, he often came over to my ticket box and talked into my tape recorder, with messages for Gillian, such as the following "Hi, Mrs. Professor! Hi, Gillian! Welcome to the carnival, where the party never stops" (2-13); "Gillian! You know what? Of all the places that I've gone before with this carnival, I've never seen such a beautiful angel fly so low!" (2-18); and "Gillian!! My favourite professor! I wanna come to your university actually and meet you and see how beautiful you are! Gillian! That name reminds me of a crescent wrench. It really turns my nuts! [howling with laughter]" (2-18).

With regard to the type of data that I recorded — aside from the interviews — it would be accurate to claim that I recorded a very wide range of information. As I spent longer and longer with the carnival, I began to notice repeated behaviours or behaviour patterns, and I noted that these were, therefore, a key practice. Conversely, I recorded anomalous incidents, which were either situations that appeared to be out of character for the practitioner(s) or did not fit in with previously noted behaviours. I would always add in my initial analysis of these scenarios, and would often later add further thoughts that would occur to me on the jumps. I used extensive descriptions. When I transcribed the tapes, I also included my tone of voice which would indicate, variously, exhaustion, annoyance, amazement, levity, or fear. An example of this is when I first learned about the beatings that occurred regularly in the carnival. I attempted to remain “sociological” by framing them in a wider context of theories of power and control, but I also did not refrain from entering my own personal reaction of horror and fear, and my instinct to run as far away as I could from the situation. Therefore, I was able to recognize my own feelings of fear of violence (residual from my own experiences with it in my marriage) and sheer revulsion of violence as retribution.

The parameters, then, for the collection of oral data were very wide. I looked in particular at the ways that the people did their work, how they reacted to their difficult labour tasks, and what the conditions were that enveloped their work projects (e.g. lack of light, pouring rain, very cold or very hot temperatures). I similarly noted my own reactions to these conditions (e.g. what it felt like to have to feel in the cold mud for a power cord, or crawl underneath a ride in the pitch dark, at

the beginning of teardown, in order to disconnect it from the generator: a combination of bravado and disgust!). The end result was a vast amount of data, much of it recorded in a stream-of-consciousness format that was a combination of sociological jargon and 'worker talk', the former which usually flowed out of the latter.

Another source of research data was various forms and letters that I obtained from the carnival administrators. They volunteered to give me photocopies of contracts that the Sullivan Amusements had with various fair boards⁴³ that show how the business arrangements are made for the carnival to play at functions like rodeos and country fairs. I also photographed several poems that were written by a carnival worker and which adorned the walls of the pie car. I kept other written memoranda such as a missive that apparently is put out every season (and which is equally routinely ignored) to remind workers to keep themselves looking neat and presentable, and ticket box signs indicating special ticket events (e.g. Family Day where all children under 12 years of age may ride the rides for only two tickets instead of four).

In summary, the methodology used was participant-observation as well as loosely structured, informal personal interviews. Having already worked for Sullivan Amusements, I was familiar with the general social and economic structure of the domain and had developed friendships and overall good rapport with the owners and the workers. I had the advantage, therefore, of having been fully accepted into

⁴³See glossary for definition.

the carnival culture as a worker first and foremost, with the result that my status as academic researcher was effectively disattended (Stoddart 1986:109). The owners and workers were aware of my status as a researcher, readily supplied a letter of consent⁴⁴ and demonstrated a willingness to fully co-operate with me.

The research data consisted of informal written personal notes that I recorded during the pre-research period (March - May 1996), audio tapes that contained interviews and personal observation data for the period of July - October 1996 (and a few further interviews conducted in Vancouver with carnival workers from November 1996 to January 1997), and various documents and memoranda from the carnival. I also took many photographs of the carnival workers and sites, always with the permission of the subjects therein (with one accidental exception, explained in Chapter Eight).

The issue of objectivity in the research, and its subsequent evaluation, was largely resolved by including my own experiences as a carnival worker, as I mention at the beginning of this chapter. As Acker et al. (1991:140) point out, the purpose of objectivity is to attempt to eliminate any bias that might result from the researcher's subjectivity. The quest for objectivity, however, can result in the complete detachment of the observer, or interviewer, from his or her objects of inquiry. This abstraction can render the subject to a category of "other who cannot reflect back on and affect the knower" (Acker et al. 1991:140). I used my position as researcher in the interviewing process actively, occasionally to paraphrase and clarify with the

⁴⁴In Chapter Four, I discuss an ethical dilemma that arose upon my discovery that the consent letter signature was, in fact, signed with a forged signature!

subjects some areas of knowledge. But, in fact, because of the vast amount of shared knowledge and experience, the need to erase any ambiguity was rare. Instead, the interviews could be characterized more accurately as conversations between friends, reaching a level of intimacy and candidness that enriched the data-gathering and produced valuable and profound explanations of the myriad of carnival experiences.

Finally, there are three significant points that I need to make in order to shed light on my particular standpoint in researching the carnival and, consequently, the data that I recorded.

The first point is that, as a female, I had a distinct advantage in terms of being accepted by the (mainly) male carnival workers and owners. This meant that nearly all the men readily agreed to talk to me informally as well as in interviews. This point is also made by Vale de Almeida in his study of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities, *The Hegemonic Male: Masculinity in a Portuguese Town* (1996), wherein he claims that female anthropologists have easier access to "the masculine world" than do male anthropologists (Vale de Almeida 1996:31). Thomas Dunk (1991) also discusses "the stereotype of the professor who is pathetically incompetent at any practical activity" (Dunk 1996:141), tying the stereotype in with overall anti-intellectualism in the working-class. What Dunk does not explore, however, is the sex (and, therefore, perceived gender) and race of the 'professor'. My experience in the working-class culture of the carnival reveals that I was always seen as a (White) woman first by the male workers, carnival worker second and only *incidentally* a researcher. I will also show that being a female had

implications for my research and social interaction with the female carnival workers. It, variously, created some barriers but also opened many interesting research doors as well. Gender, then, clearly does matter, not only as an important concept in research, analysis and theorizing, but equally so for the person conducting the research and those who are the subjects of the research.

The second point concerns the practical fact that I spent most of my working hours ensconced in a ticket box, with sporadic lunch and "bathroom" breaks. The ticket boxes were always located strategically and logically near the carnival rides so that customers could conveniently buy their ride tickets. Joint lines were set up at various locations on the carnival lot as well, but my vantage point in the ticket box allowed me to observe the carnival ride guys at work almost continuously. During slow times, when customers were scarce, the ride guys would frequently saunter over to the ticket box and engage in conversations and hilarious banter with me, so I was also privy to much personal and social interaction. The joint workers, however, were never permitted to leave their joints, even on the slowest day when nary a mooch was in sight. I did chat with them on my forays for food at my campsite, or en route to a toilet, but these conversations were often conducted while I was literally on the move, because the joint bums were discouraged from engaging in conversations with other carnival workers by their bosses, such interactions being perceived as time and focus better served by calling in customers to their joints. I did, however, observe them at work as much as I was able, depending on where the joint lines and the ticket box were located. As for the other workers (welder, electricians, office workers and other administrative personnel), I watched as they

strode by overseeing the carnival, or working on broken-down rides or equipment. I did spend one full day in the office, at my request, in order to get a full "taste" of the work involved, and visits to the office were frequent for ticket sellers, as we had to collect our bag of tickets and change just before the carnival opened, routinely go to the office to get more tickets, and return our bags at the end of the carnival night.

Lastly, and as a prominent illustration of the salience of social class in the carnival, I need to point out that, socially, I aligned myself mainly with the carnival workers (as opposed to the royalty). When I first started working in the carnival, the word quickly spread that I was a friend of Rachel's and was, therefore, by association, a quasi-member of the royalty. This meant that I was perceived as being the recipient of some degree of patronage. Being seen as one who associates with the royalty was a mark of respect. However, I also learned quite quickly that it served as a barrier to the complete openness of the workers to me. Fear that any of their "transgressions" might leak back to the bosses led to many of the workers withholding what I felt was useful and pertinent data, in terms of how they understood their work and negotiated the often oppressive conditions of that work. My decision, therefore, to associate mainly with the workers arose out of an initial dilemma. I felt that I had to make a choice between (a) a set of research data that reflected a generally balanced sample of the carnival population, but that would not necessarily reveal any in-depth data or (b) a set of research data that was able to fully utilize the vantage point that I had in the ticket box: namely, to explore more deeply the lives and experiences of the workers themselves. I never regretted my decision: in fact, I must candidly confess that I felt more empathy for the carnival

workers, as we shared much of the same very difficult living and working conditions, so a mutual understanding of these conditions was more easily obtained. My decision was cemented when, trudging through pouring rain and mud at midnight after closing one night, en route to my tent, I passed by the fifth wheel trailers of the royalty, seeing their lights on, hearing their television sets, and observing them relaxing on warm, comfortable couches. The rest of us had to cope with freezing, soaking accommodations: even my tent was pitched in a small lake, and I went to bed soaked, very cold and, quite frankly, amazed and angry that the royalty were so blissfully uncaring of the conditions under which their workers lived and toiled.

One last, but significant, issue, is that of confidentiality, specifically information given to me by subjects that dealt with illegal activities. I felt obligated not to report such information to authorities, under the provisions of Section 3 of SSHRC's Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans which reads "Information that is disclosed in the context of a professional or research relationship must be held confidential" (see Appendix G for further explanation). Throughout this thesis, however, I do acknowledge the difficulties that I experienced ethically when presented with such information.

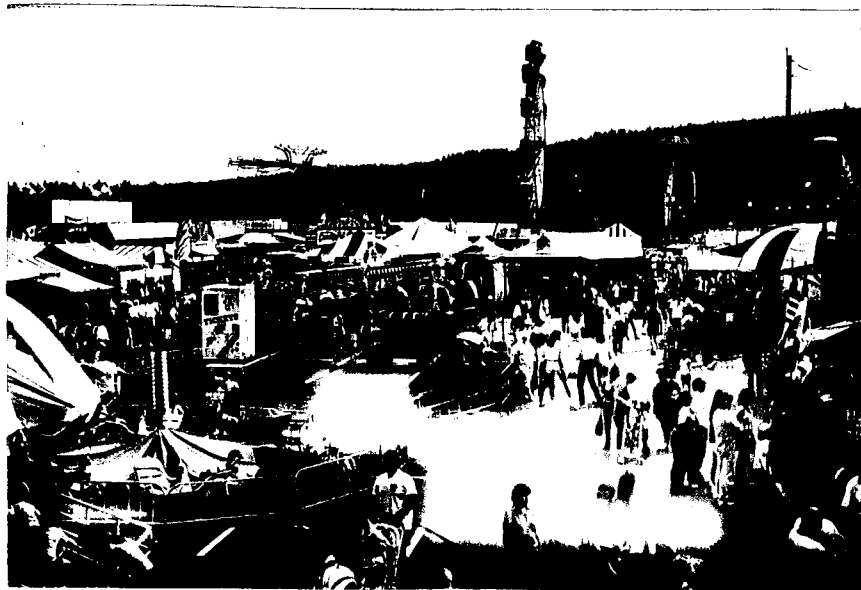
Conclusion

In the next two chapters, I provide a largely descriptive account of Sullivan Amusements. Chapter Four focuses on the physical entities that make up the carnival, as well as the groups of people that live and work therein. In Chapter Five I examine the living conditions of the various groups of carnival owners and workers, as well as wages earned. I also discuss the gendered and racialized hierarchies

that I located in Sullivan Amusements.



Two White ride guys



Kiddy Land at the carnival, including my ticket box,
at a large exhibition in British Columbia

Chapter 4

Pig Iron, Joints, Royalty and Dogs: The Physical and Social Structure of Sullivan Amusements

*July 4/96 Woke up at 9:30, rain has stopped, floor is soaked, but I'm dry. Decided against the Rec Centre shower in favour of a washdown in the tent. Cassie is very drunk, staggering, everyone's on red alert! Breaky of coffee, granola and strawberries. Went to the office at 12:15. Cynthia said Rachel and Lynn were off at the hairdressers and wanted the office floor washed. I volunteered to get water from Bucky who was hosing down the Zipper. Opened at 1 PM. It's hot, cloudy and I think we're in for more rain. Sam's in bare feet and rolled up jeans today. He has sandals but he's not wearing them. He has a squirt gun; aims at the Ticket Box. It's 3:05 PM and I'm back at the Ticket Box feeling that usual lack of sense of time that happens by the second day.
(Personal Notes)*

Introduction:

In this chapter, I describe the carnival, Sullivan Amusements, in terms of both its physical characteristics as well as the groups of people who work and live within it. In order to contextualize this illustration, I refer to the description of carnivals provided by Patrick Easto and Marcello Truzzi in their (1973) paper, "*The Carnival Social System*"⁴⁵, as well as that offered by Theodore Dembroski (1973) in "*Hanky Panks and Group Games versus Alibis and Flats: The Legitimate and Illegitimate of*

⁴⁵In their article, Easto and Truzzi refer frequently to the (1954) unpublished Master's Thesis of Wittold Krassowski entitled "*Social Structure and Professionalization in the Occupation of the Carnival Worker*". Overall, Easto and Truzzi note only minor divergences between their findings and those of Krassowski, which shows the resilience of most of the carnival structures and practices. Although it is over forty years between Krassowski's research and mine, most of my findings concur with Krassowski. When I refer to Easto and Truzzi in this chapter, I also point out any similarities to or differences from Krassowski, in order to highlight what may or may not have altered over time in the carnival.

the Carnival's Front End" to show the similarities and the differences between these earlier (and only other extant) explications of North American carnivals and what I observed nearly twenty-five years later. References are also made to the [American] Outdoor Amusement Business Association⁴⁶ (O.A.B.A.) whose existence I uncovered during an Internet search of carnivals. The O.A.B.A. is not a particularly scholarly source, but its so-called 'Carnival Facts' page does cite some statistics and other information that corroborate data found elsewhere. I also refer to observations that I made of two other large American carnivals (including an interview with the Lot Superintendent of one), during my time with Sullivan Amusements. One of these carnivals was playing at an exhibition in a mid-Western Canadian province; the other was at another larger exhibition in the state of North Dakota, just across the border from where Sullivan Amusements was playing at a small town agricultural fair.

North American Carnivals

Carnivals in Canada are few in number, at least in comparison to the numbers of carnivals in the United States. The United States' culture contains more of a tradition of carnivals and the prevalence of State Fairs also provides more fertile and numerous opportunities for American carnivals. The son (and heir apparent) of

⁴⁶The O.A.B.A. is "the largest trade association for the carnival industry...[with] almost 500 member carnivals and over 5,000 members" (O.A.B.A.). The association appears to have been formed in the early 1960's to fend off union organization attempts and "problems such as federal minimum wage and hour laws and interstate commerce regulations" which "threatened the industry" (ibid). I made several attempts to communicate with the O.A.B.A. to learn more about the attempted union organization: none of my telephone calls were returned, unfortunately.

the owner of Sullivan Amusements told me that there are at least 400 to 500 carnivals in the United States, and that, in Canada, there are between 40 and 50.⁴⁷ Easto and Truzzi (1973) offer the following statistics on American carnivals. In 1902 there were 17 carnivals in the U.S., and by 1934, this number had grown to 119; they claim there is no data for the years between 1934 and 1970, although they did locate figures for 1969: 1963 carnivals (Easto and Truzzi 1973:553). There is no way to know absolutely how many carnivals are in existence at any one time, and Easto and Truzzi claim that "writers on carnivals vary in their estimates, usually stating that between 300 to 500⁴⁸ carnivals are currently operating in the United States" (1973:553). However, because of the rather loose categorization of "carnival", anyone who acquires a ride or two can call his/her operation a carnival, which speaks strongly to the transitory and amorphous nature of carnivals, their manifestations and their lifespans.

It may be the case that statistics on American carnivals are now more available and accurate, given that many of the more 'fly-by-night' operations have disappeared. A senior Sullivan Amusements administration person told me that, in the United States, an expose on the criminal elements of carnivals was conducted by an American news program during the 1980's and, since that time, the American federal government has watched and monitored very closely the activities of all

⁴⁷Most are in the eastern provinces. The son, Paul Sullivan, said that there are five in Western Canada.

⁴⁸A more updated source for this information proclaims that "there are approximately 500 carnivals that travel the United States each year, ranging in size from one or two rides to over 100 portable rides" (O.A.B.A. "Carnival Facts").

carnivals⁴⁹. Consequently, many of the smaller, less savoury carnival operations have been forced to shut down, leaving only the largest, healthiest and most 'sanitized' to survive and prosper⁵⁰. Most of the large American carnivals now have their own on-site drug- and alcohol-testing paraphernalia and a rigorous procedure in place for employees caught in or suspected of engaging in illegal substances, including counselling and rehabilitation (discussed in more detail in Chapter Eleven. When I asked Paul Sullivan why such a program was not in place at Sullivan Amusements, given the high degree of substance abuse, Paul replied that it was not legal in Canada to drug-test employees.

With regard to exact numbers of carnivals in Canada, there is no distinct category for carnivals according to Statistics Canada; instead they come under the more general category of "Amusement Parks, Carnivals and Circuses". There are a total of 308 of these in Canada (as of 1997), broken down provincially as follows:

Newfoundland	8
Manitoba	19
Ontario	91
Quebec	89
New Brunswick	4
Nova Scotia	14
P.E.I.	6
Alberta	19
Saskatchewan	11

⁴⁹I attempted to locate the expose by contacting all the major American television networks, none of which had a record of such a program.

⁵⁰The O.A.B.A. certainly presents a very wholesome image of American carnivals with its statement that "almost all [American] carnivals are sponsored by non-profit organizations which receive a significant portion of the proceeds from the event. Carnivals have helped to fund scholarships, buy needed fire or emergency rescue equipment, and generally help organizations fund charity work in almost every community in the country" (O.A.B.A. "Carnival Facts").

Because of the inclusion of carnivals under this broader category, there is no way of ascertaining precisely how many are carnivals. The only further information I have on the distribution of carnivals across Canada is, again, through conversations with the owner of Sullivan Amusements and his son. According to them, there are only three carnivals based in British Columbia, and none in Alberta, Saskatchewan, or Manitoba (although I learned in 1998 that one Ontario carnival does some spots in Manitoba). There are many in Ontario and Quebec but, due to the larger population in these provinces, these carnival companies only rarely travel outside their provincial boundaries. As well, in the province of Quebec, many of the carnivals are what might be termed Carnivals, meaning that they are affiliated with religious or other traditional ceremonies (e.g. Winter Carnivals in Quebec City).

Absolutely essential to the success of any carnival is the customer base: the larger the population, the greater the revenue. The relative scarcity of dense populations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba renders these areas as only marginally lucrative. Of the few carnivals based in British Columbia, only Sullivan Amusements plays in British Columbia and also travels into the central Canadian provinces. They are one of only two Canadian carnivals to travel to the central prairie provinces, although one or two large American carnivals are contracted to play at large annual exhibitions in some of the prairie cities.

Another factor that serves to problematize the precise gathering of statistics on carnivals is the common practice of North American carnivals, especially the

larger enterprises, to split into two (and, occasionally, three) groups. These “splits”⁵¹ occur when two (or more) spots are booked simultaneously. Another circumstance under which a split may occur is if the carnival is booked spontaneously, during the season, at a spot that coincides with a booked spot. On such occasions, the rides and concessions are almost evenly divided so that each carnival segment has an equal number of large and small rides and concessions.

Splits are demanding on the workers, especially the ride guys who have to endure extra setups, teardowns and long drives. During my time with Sullivan Amusements, I experienced two splits which included what were known as Hell Nights. A Hell Night usually took the following similar form. After working a full 14-hour work day (the hours that the show was open), the workers immediately started tearing down upon the show closing, usually around 11:00 P.M., which took about six hours. They then drove to the next spot (which could take between three and eight hours), immediately started setting up the carnival again in time for opening at noon the next day, and then worked a full 14-hour shift while the show was open.

Hell Night often included “double-backs” which entailed a truck driver having to take a ride to the next spot, and then immediately turn around, return to the

⁵¹Easto and Truzzi (1973:556) also refer to larger shows which frequently split into two units. However, in such cases, the carnivals are sufficiently large that they have enough rides and concessions (and personnel) to effectively run two or sometimes three autonomous units, each of which has its own route. Occasionally, for a particularly large spot (such as large exhibition), all units will converge into one massive show. One of the other B.C. carnivals, for example, is comprised of three units, each headed by a family member. Similarly, the American carnival that I observed in North Dakota was a composite of many sub-units that only melded for this one large exhibition each season. This carnival's Lot Superintendent told me their operation consists of two separate units that converge three times each season (Marcus 77). And the American carnival I observed in one of the Canadian prairie provinces was also an amalgamation of several sub-units (1:5).

previous spot, and drive another ride. This is because there were not always enough trucks to transport all the rides at one time to two different locations. One veteran driver gave me his description of a recent double-back that he and another senior driver guy had made:

- Jack: We just left [a town] on Friday, took the Greyhound [bus] to [town about 600 miles east], picked up two trailers there, brought them here to [town in between, 300 miles west] and then got a ride back to [first town, another 300 miles west]. We had to tear down our rides [6 hours] and drive from [first town] back to [town in between, 300 miles east].
- Fiona: Was this all in one day?
- Jack: All in one weekend.
- Fiona: Did you get some sleep somewhere?
- Jack: On the Greyhound (Jack 2).

In order to sustain themselves during this very demanding ordeal, many of the carnival workers took what I was told were caffeine pills (known as “bennies”) and I noticed that the tension prior to teardown at the spot before the split was always extremely high, especially amongst the ride guys who performed the most physically-demanding labour in the carnival. During my observations of the ride guys during the hours of work after they set up the rides (towards the latter part of Hell Night), I noted that it was “like watching The Night of the Living Dead” (personal notes): they walked like zombies, with completely dead eyes, often just standing or sitting and twitching uncontrollably. In conversations with other carnival workers about my observations (during which I could not help but voice my concern at their health and ability to safely build and run the rides), I learned that this was not uncommon, as the ride guys were coming down from extremely high doses of bennies that they needed to stay awake for the 36 or 48 hours that Hell Night

spanned.

Carnival Seasons and Routes

Most carnivals operate approximately eight months of each year, from March through to October⁵². Being essentially outdoor operations, carnivals are strongly influenced by the seasons and weather in general.

Carnivals follow almost the same route, playing the same spots, year after year, due to contracts⁵³ which are drawn up between the carnival and the various hiring entities, such as malls, small towns and Fair Boards. Fair Boards (also called Committees) are made up of (usually volunteer) prominent business people (usually males) who represent the regular, annual agricultural fairs and larger exhibitions that provide the most common (and profitable) venue for a travelling carnival. Included in contract negotiations are the financial arrangements: in most cases, according to the senior Sullivan Amusements staff, a percentage of the take is paid to the hiring body⁵⁴. Contract periods can range from three to five years and, although contract

⁵²Easto and Truzzi (1973:554) concur with Krassowski (1954) who similarly states that the majority of U.S. carnivals operate from April until October, while others are year-round operations. The carnival in North Dakota, for example, travels eight or nine months of the year (Marcus interview, p. 77).

⁵³ Dembroski (1973:569) also refers to the contracts entered into by show owners with "towns, cities, and county and state fairs", included in which are the financial arrangements that take the form of "a financial guarantee and/or a percentage of the carnival's gross income."

⁵⁴As Sullivan Amusements is a strictly cash-run operation, I asked Rachel how a financial figure is arrived at in order to compute the agreed-upon percentage at the end of the spot. She told me that the same informal guidelines apply in these cases as in the cases of the nut (percentage) paid by many of the independents. In both sets of circumstances, a check with the previous year's figures provides the carnival with a kind of bench-mark figure to go by, while also considering any mitigating factors such as the weather that may affect the revenue. Rachel advised me that there was an unspoken

'rollovers' are common⁵⁵, it is the larger exhibitions that often provide the most lively competition among carnival show owners when such contracts are up for renewal (see Appendix D for a typical carnival contract with a fair board).

The route list of carnivals (contracted spots) is submitted to an American publication called *Amusement Business* prior to the start of each season but, again, characteristic of the carnival culture, this seems to be a rather arbitrary or voluntary procedure. Easto and Truzzi state that "carnival owners do not always submit their route lists for publication" (1973:553) — yet they offer no explanation. There appears to be a very practical reason why route lists may not be submitted (or only parts of the route declared). There is great competition among carnivals, and a carnival owner's biggest fear is that another carnival will have set up in a spot a week before their scheduled spot, or in a town nearby at the same time as the other carnival, thereby "bleeding them dry" (taking the town's money). According to Rachel (Paul Sullivan's partner), Sullivan Amusements does submit a route list, but it is abbreviated and 'edited' for precisely the above-noted reason⁵⁶.

Another reason for not disclosing the full carnival route (and, consequently,

acknowledgment between the carnival and its contractees that the figure was never completely accurate, but close enough to the previous year so that disputes could not develop.

⁵⁵The American carnival playing North Dakota, for example, has had the contract for that spot for over twenty years (Marcus 77).

⁵⁶This, in fact, created a temporary difficulty for me: At the beginning of the season, I had been given a route list (places and dates). I had made domestic arrangements around these dates, and only learned of the extension of the season in casual conversation, finding out that it was quite normal to quote a 'bogus' end of the season which, in reality, continued for more than another month.

season length) concerned Revenue Canada: Sullivan Amusements theoretically had a season the exact length of the minimum time period necessary for a worker to qualify for Employment Insurance. Sullivan Amusements, therefore, called the periods before this legitimate work period the "pre-season", and paid all workers cash daily, not deducting any income tax for those who wished it (and therefore not submitting any to the federal government!)⁵⁷.

Physical and Organizational Structure of Sullivan Amusements

Sullivan Amusements can be categorized as a mid-size carnival⁵⁸, with a total of approximately fifteen large rides (known as "adult rides"), about fifteen children's rides (known as "kiddie rides"), three joint lines (groups of concession games), ten food joints (food concessions) and a few miscellaneous sales joints⁵⁹. Typical of

⁵⁷I also learned that workers could 'buy' weeks to make up enough to collect Employment Insurance. In one case, towards the end of the 'legitimate' portion of the season, a female carny who worked in a food joint wanted to leave her job to be with her male partner, another carnival worker. The show was splitting and the food joint was not going with his side of the split. Rachel agreed that she could buy the two weeks she needed to make up the minimum number of weeks for E.I. As Rachel said to me "She'll be laid off to me but to the government she will have worked another two weeks" (27-10).

⁵⁸Easto and Truzzi agree with carnival size definitions that were provided by Wittold Krassowski in 1954: Krassowski claims that a medium-sized carnival was "a truck show with 15 to 20 rides and 50 to 100 concessions". This contrasts with a large carnival which was usually transported by railroad cars and contained approximately 100 rides and "hundreds of concessions and shows" (Easto and Truzzi 1973:554). Rachel referred to the American carnival playing at the prairie exhibition as a typical large U.S. operation: "70, 80 rides, with 3 or 4 guys plus a foreman on each ride...you got 200 or 300 people working — it's a big company" (1-5).

⁵⁹The structure of Sullivan Amusements in terms of its key personnel and their actual jobs was remarkably similar to descriptions supplied by Easto and Truzzi (1973:555). The geographical layout of a typical carnival lot as described by Easto and Truzzi has also remained almost identical -- a horseshoe-shape — with the larger rides at the mid-point (rear) of the horseshoe, and smaller rides and games/concessions alternating up both sides of the horseshoe. Often one or two joint lines interspersed with food joints were placed up the centre of the lot, with ticket boxes strategically located: one near the entrance to the lot,

most carnivals, however, the owner of Sullivan Amusements did not actually own all of these units, although he did own most of the central components of the carnival, and the majority of the rides.

The organizational structure of Sullivan Amusements was complex and often quite informal, which is characteristic of most carnivals (Easto and Truzzi 1973:555). However, like most organizations, its structure and relationships were based on relations of power and authority, access to that power, and the parameters to which that power extended. The power relations were often very informal and difficult to discern, especially to the uninitiated. However, the distinctions between the various levels were well-known to the carnival occupants. .

As I have already stated, carnivals are highly complex structures that with a cursory appraisal might provoke the carnival non-savant to assume they are nothing more than a completely illogical assemblage of human beings and colourful amusements, devoid of organization. It certainly took a few weeks for me to understand not only the carnival hierarchy but, more significantly, the ways in which that hierarchy was constructed. Like most people in an alien social environment, I (unconsciously at first) used my prior knowledge of business organizations and bureaucratic structures to try to understand the various levels of authority, prestige, and power among and between individuals and groups. By about my third day on the job I realized that almost none of the conventional rules of authority, upward mobility, necessary paper qualifications for jobs, and other formal and informal

and another near the large rides at the rear of the horseshoe.

modes of operation and job progression applied at Sullivan Amusements. And, later, I learned that Sullivan Amusements was not an anomaly in the carnival world, but that nearly all carnivals operated in a similar manner.

Due to these complexities, I offer a chart (Appendix E) which illustrates the hierarchy at Sullivan Amusements. The hierarchy was based almost directly on the Weberian interpretation of class as a base for social action, in which people are imbued with degrees of power depending on the class that they occupy and "...this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income and... under the conditions of the commodity or labor markets" (Weber in Giddens 1982:61). Cece, a joint line supervisor, explained the economic structure at Sullivan Amusements in the following manner:

The only people dealing with the higher-ups are the ones with just a little bit less money than the people with all the money. And then as it goes down the line, the less you have, the lower the people you deal with, which is very similar to any criminal organization that I've ever encountered. But I don't think that their contacts with organized crime remain today. Nowadays I don't think there are contacts with the underworld or illicit nefarious activities, but the practices are the same, only because it's the only way to run a type of business like this where you are a gypsy on the move (Cece 22).

As Cece explained, the social class and power of carnival workers was determined by ownership of carnival rides, games and other concessions. The ownership component was strengthened even further by the familial connections: relatives and close friends (ranging from siblings, partners and cousins, through to relatives of close friends) had much greater access to the opportunity to become an owner or part-owner of a piece of carnival equipment, which resulted in a very insular cabal

that was almost impenetrable by someone without the necessary connections⁶⁰.

It was this latter element that was, initially, unknown to me. I simply could not understand why one person clearly had privileges and prestige over others which, to the unknowing (and rational) observer, defied logic and even fairness. I constructed the hierarchy on the basis of social class and its resultant power and it is separated into name(s), job titles and any material carnival components that they owned and controlled. I hasten to add that this chart of carnival workers does not include every person who worked at or for Sullivan Amusements over the season, but it does contain the key personnel and employee groups.

I now continue with my description of Sullivan Amusements by expanding on each of the major employee and/or owner categories, providing details on the actual work that they did in the carnival, as well as their gender and race.

I. Ron and Lynn Sullivan (owners of Sullivan Amusements) (both White)

At the head of the carnival was the owner of Sullivan Amusements, Ron Sullivan, a man in his mid-50's who, along with his wife, Lynn, essentially ran the

⁶⁰Easto and Truzzi found that "a majority [of carnies] come into the carnival world through family connections with the outdoor amusement industry, if not directly from carnivals" (Easto and Truzzi 1973:559). The O.A.B.A. also state that "most carnivals remain family-owned businesses with second and even third generation ownership" (O.A.B.A. "Carnival Facts"). This was certainly the case in Sullivan Amusements at the administrative level and, occasionally, at the worker level. In my interview with the Lot Superintendent of the North Dakota carnival, Marcus discusses the complex family structure of that carnival: "...The youngest son he runs the second unit [of the carnival]. The [other son] he's the vice-president. His wife's the office manager. And [the owner's wife] takes an active role in the office management when she's out. You might say, yeah, families are, most any carnival you go to in America, family members do occupy some of the high level positions, 'cause basically it's a cash business, you know. You can't really just grab somebody off the street. They're normally not used to dealing with large sums of cash. Family members you can normally trust them the most" (Marcus 78).

entire operation. Sullivan himself owned most of the rides, and a few of the money game concessions. I learned that Ron ran away to work in a small travelling carnival at the age of twelve in the 1950's, inheriting the small show in his early twenties. He built it up over the years to the size that it was at the time of the research. Although he did have the final say in all carnival decisions,⁶¹ Ron Sullivan had become more of a figurehead⁶² in the last few years.

While I was with the carnival, Lynn left early in the season due to a family illness in Vancouver. She did, however, remain in touch with Ron, Rachel and Paul throughout the season and occasionally gave advice to Rachel on the running of the show. And just as Ron's ultimate authority had not waned, neither had Lynn's, despite her physical absence. Ron's activities were, despite his power, largely public relations issues⁶³, such as dealing with the most serious infractions by

⁶¹Again, Easto and Truzzi refer to the carnival owner as "unquestionably [occupying] the highest prestige position in the carnival" (1973:556).

⁶²The owner of the American carnival I observed in the prairie exhibition occupied a similar, almost feudal/magisterial, figurehead position. The owner, an elderly man, officially retired several years ago, having been bought out by his son-in-law. The older man now just "comes out to the fair conventions and helps sign contracts and stuff" (1-6). (The son-in-law was a ride guy who married the owner's daughter. In a discussion with Sullivan's son, I learned that this was an unusual progression — most carnival owners would never permit their daughter to become involved socially with a ride guy.) Ron Sullivan's role in the carnival was quite similar — almost an elder statesman position whose wisdom and opinion were greatly respected by all carnival workers. It also seems to be the case that the carnival culture is so insulated against the mainstream culture, that "retiring" carnival workers (and owners) are extremely loathe to relinquish all ties (see also Stuttgen (1992) who examines the post-retirement artistic projects of an ex-carny).

⁶³Easto and Truzzi refer to a specific occupation in the carnival — the patch — who acts as a kind of informal legal liaison or public relations person and whose duty it is to take care of "carnival-related complaints or misgivings held by local officials" (1973:557), usually by bribing the offended individual. I found that these duties were dispersed among several key carnival employees, depending on the nature of the "beef" as it was called. For example, if a customer felt that he/she had not received a satisfactory ride, or if the show

carnival workers as well as socializing with prominent people in the various towns where the carnival played who were connected in some form with the booking of the carnival (e.g. people on Fair Boards). He did, nonetheless, command enormous respect from all the carnival workers and still wielded tremendous power in terms of hiring and firing (often at will), as well as in terms of the location of the various independent rides and concessions⁶⁴.

II. Neil (White male married to White female)

Another prominent owner in Sullivan Amusements, and one about whom I received much conflicting information regarding the extent of his ownership, was Neil, a man who owned and controlled (but did not personally run) three of the rides, and who claimed to have a high degree of financial ownership in Ron Sullivan's carnival properties. Paul and Rachel told me that his investment was minor; Neil himself told me that he owned more than half of Sullivan's properties⁶⁵. He

had closed before the customer's tickets had been used up, usually Rachel in the office would placate the customer by giving some free tickets which the customer could use the next day or even the next season. The unspoken word, however, in all cases, was that the customer must be calmed down as much as possible to avoid any possible attendance/attention by local authorities.

⁶⁴This point is also made by Easto and Truzzi who equate the show owner's status with his material wealth in the carnival: "The more he owns of the rides, shows, and concessions, the greater his authority, and thus, to some degree, his status" (1973:557). Dembroski also refers to the show owner's "total and unquestioned authority over what is booked and how it operates on his show" (1973:568)

⁶⁵I first learned of Neil's involvement in the carnival quite casually at the first spot where I re-joined the carnival at the beginning of July. After I set up my tent in the parking lot of the mall where the carnival was playing, Chuck (novelty joint owner) offered me a glass of wine with the assurance of "no funny stuff" (meaning that his intentions were pure!). Neil and his wife soon joined us and, upon my explanation of what I was actually doing in the carnival, Neil's wife expressed surprise that I had not elicited the permission of Neil to conduct the research. This put me in a rather delicate ethical position as Lynn Sullivan had

certainly did very little hands-on work on his rides, or on any other aspect of the carnival, treating the season more as an extended vacation in his luxurious fifth wheel trailer, zooming around the lot on his flamboyant turquoise Harley-Davidson motorcycle. As an illustration of the degree of familial connections in the carnival, Neil used to be married to Lynn's sister; he re-married and both his wife and her son (who works on one of his rides) travelled with him for the entire season. I also noticed that, although Neil was certainly well-liked by all the carnival workers (at all levels), he was not treated with the almost stupefied awe that Ron received from the majority of the carnival workers.

III. Rachel and Paul (both White)

Ron's son, Paul, aged 23 at the time of the research, ran the carnival actively on a day-to-day basis and it was common knowledge around that carnival that he would eventually take over the entire operation. Paul shared the running of the carnival with his female partner, Rachel, who was in charge of the carnival office and everyday financial transactions. I learned that Rachel's entry into the carnival followed the pattern typical of most female carnival workers. She had met Paul in a

said quite clearly that she and her husband owned the carnival; therefore, I only needed to obtain a letter of permission to conduct the research from them. Neil himself did not seem concerned, expressing it in the declaration that "we don't give a rat's ass". I decided to ask him for a letter to that effect (in slightly different wording, of course) which I never did receive.

However, according to Rachel, Neil's degree of carnival ownership was very minor. This was yet another instance where I was told contradictory information by several of the parties "in the know". These paradoxes often presented themselves to me during the research; I simply decided to leave them unresolved, as I felt that their very presence was germane to the many layers of "truth" that I uncovered during my time with the carnival. However, given the developments that I learned about in August 1999 (see Chapter Eleven), it does appear that Neil did, in fact, own a substantial portion of the Sullivan rides.

bar and subsequently joined the carnival working in the money games, while she and Paul continued their personal relationship. She told me that she was successful as a games worker because her physical appearance ("big tits" as she described it) drew in male customers. By the next year (the year prior to my research), Rachel was an informal apprentice of Lynn Sullivan, who was in charge of the everyday financial and office administration matters. Rather like Ron's relationship with his son, in terms of passing on the mantle of authority, it was also the case that Rachel had, for the most part, taken over many of Lynn's duties⁶⁶.

IV. Rick (White male)

This man, roughly the same age as Paul Sullivan, occupied an unnamed, yet highly powerful, position in the carnival. Known informally as Paul's "right-hand man", he had entered the carnival in, again, a style typical at the higher ranked levels. I was told by several people that he had gone to school with Paul (exact location unknown) and was a close friend of Paul's. He co-owned the "Funhouse" (a haunted house and my first job location) along with Paul, and he also solely owned one of the carnival trucks, the cab of which was his home. Rick was one of the few

⁶⁶One of her duties was to sign any cheques, by forging Ron Sullivan's signature. Rachel told me about this in a very matter-of-fact manner: Ron Sullivan never signed his name to any of the cheques; instead, Lynn had been signing them, using his actual name. One of Rachel's first duties, therefore, was to learn how to forge Ron Sullivan's (actually Lynn's) signature. Rachel told me, with great hilarity, of a situation where Ron had had a cheque returned as, on the one rare occasion where he had actually signed a cheque, the bank had deemed that it was a forged signature and had rejected it. She then told me that she (Rachel) had actually signed the Letter of Consent that had been sent to me, forging Lynn's rendition of Ron's signature, although with Lynn's consent and knowledge. This, of course, presented me with yet another ethical dilemma but by this point, the research was well under way. It did, however, explain why Ron was unaware that I was conducting the research until the subject came up in a conversation I had with him. Fortunately, he did not object to the research!

royalty members that most of the other carnival workers strongly disliked, feared and held in relatively low regard. From conversations with many carnival workers, I learned that the low opinion and fear emanated from Rick's role as conveyor of negative information about (in particular) ride guys, to Paul. In many ways, Rick's "job" as Paul's right-hand man extended beyond assisting Paul to quite literally carrying out Paul's orders to fire or punish the ride guys when necessary. Given that the element of trust was held in high regard throughout the carnival, Rick's penchant for telling Paul about ride guys' (real or concocted) infractions translated into a position of enormous power over the ride guys and other low-level workers.

V. Dwight (White male)

Equal in status to Harry Sullivan was Dwight, Lynn's cousin, who worked as the lot man. His central function was to "lay out the lot", meaning that he was one of the first to arrive at each carnival spot and, aided by small wooden posts and rope, he marked off the required area for the various rides and concessions, using his feet to mark off the distances⁶⁷. For the larger spots, he relied on previous years' maps of the lots, making the necessary adjustments for additions or deletions from those years' carnival components (see Appendix F for photograph of layout of one of the largest spots in Sullivan Amusement's seasonal route). Dwight also sold jewellery at some of the carnival spots, setting up a table outside his fifth-wheel trailer.

⁶⁷The "lot man" is also specified by Easto and Truzzi as the person who "arrives on the grounds ahead of the carnival and decides where to place the various attractions" (1973:556). Easto and Truzzi also point out the vast amount of knowledge possessed by the "lot man" in knowing the precise dimensions of each ride, joint and concession.

VI. Harry Sullivan (White male)

Ron's brother, Harry (whom I never actually met as he and his wife travelled ahead of the carnival) worked as a public relations person, setting up radio and newspaper advertisements in the local papers where the carnival was booked. He also reserved hotel rooms for a few of the quite elderly men — long-time friends of Ron Sullivan — who worked only in the P.C. stores and flatties (see glossary for details), some of whom hailed from as far away as New York City.

VII. John (White male)

Administratively, the next significant carnival employee was the Lot Superintendent⁶⁸, John, whose duties included the overall maintenance of all the carnival trucks and rides, as well as some public relations tasks, as, prior to working for the carnival, John was involved for years on various Fair Boards. He had the power to hire and fire ride guys, and also acted informally as a kind of a father figure to many of the younger ride guys who turned to him if they had a personal problem.⁶⁹ John was another carnival worker who entered the carnival through

⁶⁸Easto and Truzzi refer to the "ride superintendent" as "a kind of grand mechanic who knows how to assemble, disassemble and repair all of the major riding devices" (1973:557), which is a very apt description of John. They also refer to the enormity of responsibilities inherent in this job.

⁶⁹John's duties in the carnival reflected a pattern that I located in many occupations: people's duties were modified according to the individual skills and abilities which they brought to the carnival. With the exception of ride guys, joint bums and food concessions workers, rather than seeking a person to fill a particular position, the carnival owners were more likely to consider a person an ideal carnival employee and create or adjust a position to fit that person's abilities (which were not usually credentialed, but fell more in the category of personal characteristics or leanings). I, for example, was offered a job for the following season that involved great responsibility and integrity — running a concession that was solely for the carnival workers (selling carnival uniform t-shirts and snack food). They had no intention of posting the job opening as one would probably find in a more

friendship, with Ron Sullivan, which resulted from their many years of contact when John was on the Fair Board of his home town. According to John, Ron asked him for years to work for the carnival, each time 'upping the ante' in terms of perks, in order to entice him. John was not unfamiliar with carnivals, having worked for one as a teenager. He explained his entry into Sullivan Amusements during our interview:

I've been in trucking and farming for many, many years after that, and when I moved to [interior B.C. town] in 1972, I got involved with the exhibition pretty well every way down there. The fair always seemed to draw me, and I worked my way up through the exhibition there. I was livestock and operations superintendent for sixteen years and finally president of the exhibition. I've known Ron Sullivan for about 20 years and one of the first times I ever met Ron, I mentioned that I was ex-carnival. He quizzed me and he said, "Oh, no, you aren't ex-carnival". So he started asking certain questions and hitting on some of the slang and that. After a couple hours and a few drinks, he says, "John, you're ex-carny!"... I always said, "Yeah, you get itchy feet, you know, seeing you guys in town ready to take off". That's where it started from. And about eight years ago I was thinking about getting out of the farming. Ron said "Gee, if you ever want a job, we got one out here for you". Well, over the period of six years prior to me coming out here, he kept making things better and better for me until finally I said to heck with it, I'm selling the farm and I gave up my position with the exhibition and came out here to work for the show (John 21).

John was initially hired (in 1995) as foreman of the kiddy rides and to "run the shop" which meant to be in charge of the truck maintenance. By the end of the first year, he became the Show Superintendent, as well as continuing to oversee the kiddy rides.

conventional work location. The job offer also demonstrated to me how I was seen, even by the carnival owners, as a "carny" (and therefore likely to want to return the next season) rather than a sociologist! I thanked them for the offer but said that I hoped to be teaching the next season.

VIII. Gary (White male)

The owner of one of the joint lines (games), Gary also wielded a high degree of power in the carnival. I was never able to ascertain exactly how or why he was given this right by the carnival owners. He was, in fact, a relative newcomer to Sullivan Amusements. However, again, he was part of a familial network — his two brothers also owned joint lines and one of his brothers co-owned a joint line with Matt. As well as overseeing his joint line, Gary was in charge of “loking” the carnival transportation/living quarters entourage (which included me and my tent) at each spot. Gary also acted on behalf of Ron Sullivan in various firings. As well, I learned that Gary was in charge of the so-called “beating crew”: a small group of ride guys who were selected to carry out the punitive beatings on ride guys and joint bums, explored more fully in Chapter Eight.

IX. Frank, Peter and Scott (all White males)

These three men, the first two who were the electricians and the third who was the welder, had equal parity in terms of power, although Frank enjoyed somewhat greater prestige given that he owned one of the kiddy rides and also doubled as a Lot Foreman (his immediate supervisor being John). The carnival also employed a welder (one of the few qualified -- i.e. credentialed -- employees). Both the welder (Scott) and the electrician (Frank) had worked for the carnival for years, and came from families who also worked for other carnivals for decades. All three men had female partners who also worked for the carnival: Scott's partner, Cynthia, worked in the office and, occasionally, as a ticket-seller. Moira, Frank's partner, worked on some of the money joints, and also looked after the couple's

one-year-old son. Peter, also an electrician, was in a relationship with Britney, one of the "floss girls", who entered the show by way of a previous relationship with a ride guy, whom she met when the carnival was playing in her home town earlier in the season.

X. The Independents (all White males and one White female)

As the independent contractors hired by the carnival comprised an eclectic group of people and equipment, I now provide more details. The independents were people who owned their own rides, game joint lines, food concessions, or miscellaneous joints (e.g. palm reader, t-shirt/jewellery vendor, novelty joint, pony rides), some of whom remained with Sullivan Amusements for the entire season, and others who moved among various carnivals throughout the season⁷⁰.

The arrangements for the more itinerant independents were very loose and informal: handshake agreements with Ron Sullivan to give a percentage (known as 'points') of their day's take (called "the nut")⁷¹ as a kind of rent. Points varied tremendously from 20% to 45%, depending on how well-known they were to Ron Sullivan, how much money their independently-owned "business" generated, and,

⁷⁰ Dembroski provides a good description of independents that I found mirrored in the situation of Sullivan Amusements: he refers to the arbitrary nature of the largely informal contractual arrangements made between the independents and the show owner, as well as the degree of privilege that manifests itself in where the independent is placed on the lot. Dembroski also refers to the "hopscotching" of independents between various shows that frequently occurs (Dembroski 1973:569).

⁷¹ According to Rachel, the nut is "the rent that independents bring in, because years ago, when circuses used to pull into town, the mayor of the town would get upset when circuses would head out without paying, so he would take one nut off of [sic] every wheel of every trailer and when the circus trainer brought his money in, his rent, the mayor would give him his nuts back" (11-13).

quite simply, how well-liked they were by Ron Sullivan. Where the independents were loked was a crucial factor in their (and Sullivan Amusement's) daily revenue, and all the previously stated factors came into play in terms of their loke⁷². Dwight, the lot man, decided their location on the carnival lot. If they were new to the carnival, they were more likely to receive a poor loke, as the higher the status (for all the above-named reasons), the better the loke⁷³, as Cece explains, quite bitterly, below:

- Cece: My lokes suck. That's another thing too, is, I came out this year and I had a couple of strong agents⁷⁴ that were willing to work for me, and they kept bringing in the money, but they'd get bad spots. They'd bring in the money and they'd get bad spots, you know, even in their bad lokes they'd still do fuckin' strong. And yet we never got, until the spot after they left, all of a sudden incredible lokes for our stuff, after the hard agents are gone, because they were given shitty lokes.
- Fiona: When you're loked, are you simply told this is where your joints go?
- Cece: Yeah, this is where this joint goes, this is where that joint goes.

⁷²Easto and Truzzi also point out that the overall status of an independent "varies with the number of attractions an independent owner operates" (1973:557). I found, however, that the inverse was also the case: an independent was more likely to accumulate more attractions if he (most of them were male) had culled favour with the show's owner, either by earning large amounts of money or by ingratiating himself in other ways.

⁷³Dembroski also describes in detail the complexities of loking and the unspoken progression that newcomers must go through: a first-time independent will likely be loked near the back end of the lot (farthest from the densest flow of pedestrian traffic) and "if he performs well and remains with the show, his location improves in subsequent weeks" (1973:570). Dembroski similarly refers to the competitiveness involved in getting a good loke: "Locating concessions is a constant source of frustrations and conflict in the life of the carnival.... [The complaining] is not ... done in the show owner's presence, since he has complete and ultimate control over who remains on the show.... The concessionaire is usually careful to avoid alienating him and indeed employs a variety of tactics to court the favor of both the show owner and the lot man" (Dembroski 1973:570).

⁷⁴"Agents" were seasoned joint workers with a reputation for earning large sums of money. See Chapter Nine for a discussion of joint line labour.

- Fiona: Yeah. I've seen lots of evidence of that and lots of the independents in my interviews with them have mentioned this. And this is a major thorn in the side of people who have may have crossed swords with somebody in the higher-ups. This is like a punishment thing.
- Cece: Oh, yeah!.
- Fiona: You get the shit loke and, yes, this highly preferential treatment that's given to the people that have been around for a helluva long time, hob nob with the royalty, at first it appears arbitrary, but in fact it's not arbitrary, 'cause you can see the pattern emerging.
- Cece: Oh, yeah. The bullshit has been going on out here since I've been out here.
- Fiona: It's probably not unique to this carnival. Would you agree with that?
- Cece: No. Most of the time, most carnivals that I've seen is they put the joints on the basis of how much money they pull in. If you've got a good joint, you get a good place, because it makes more money for them.
- Fiona: And you would say that with this carnival, that is not always the case.
- Cece: Not always, no. I know of a few times where my joints, where I know actual figures on other people's joints, 'cause people had cut loose, but I know my joints had done better, yet they get better call than I do. So then that goes to my staffing problem. If I don't have the lokes, they can't get the money. I don't have the staff. If I don't have the staff, I don't get the money and I don't get the lokes. They [royalty] know it. They can't not know it. They've been in the business longer than I have (Cece 21-22).

Appropriate deference to the lot man also had a bearing on the loke. A good example was a woman (the only female independent⁷⁵ that I encountered) who owned a (fake) bronco-ride/photos/home-made popcorn joint. As this was her first season with Sullivan Amusements, Dwight gave her very poor lokes, which meant that she had few customers and, consequently, low revenue. After a few of these

⁷⁵Many of the independents were husband-and-wife teams, but males were always clearly in charge of the operations: wives acted in an assistant capacity on the independent ride or joint, and were completely responsible for all domestic work in their travelling homes.

decidedly unprofitable lokes, she demanded from Dwight a better loke at the next spot, whereupon they had a heated argument. He punished her by giving her the worst loke at the next spot, a huge agricultural fair that had tremendous lucrative possibilities for her, even so far as to place her in a location where her joint was constantly in the shade, effectively eliminating any good photography. She eventually left the entire carnival at the end of the spot, vowing never to work for Sullivan Amusements again. In contrast, a mini-donut independent joint consistently got one of the best lokes on the lot, as the owner had been with Sullivan Amusements for many years and his food joint was very popular with the customers.

Another rather arbitrary arrangement that I learned about was that some independents had to pay quite a large "deposit", known as a "performance bond" (ranging from \$500 to \$5000) at the beginning of the season to Dwight as a form of insurance that they would stay with the show for the season (or the agreed-upon spots). The amount given to the owner of Sullivan Amusements ranged from \$500 to \$1000. One independent related the following regarding this deposit which, in his case, was demanded by Dwight at almost every spot that he played.

- Norm: I have to pay Dwight \$1000 to go to [large, lucrative spot] because I don't go to every spot.
- Fiona: Would you get the \$1000 back?
- Norm: No, it's a fee for going into [the spot] and the thing is, there, it ain't worth it.
- Fiona: No? Because you still have to pay your 25%?
- Norm: No, he wants a grand plus 10%. But, even working very hard, the most that I could probably end up with in my pocket, at the end of the day, would be about \$100, so it's not worth my while. So that's why I'm going to the P.N.E.⁷⁶. I can make a bit more.

⁷⁶Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver, B.C.

All it costs me is \$100 a day at the P.N.E. and he wants \$200? [The spot in question was for 5 days.] And, hey, a bad day at the P.N.E. is \$400 (Norm 12-13).

This money was supposed to be returned to them at the end of the season upon successful completion but, according to one source, Dwight simply pocketed the money, denying that he had ever received it in the first place. In keeping with the carnival's 'cash-only' policy, no written records of these transactions were ever kept⁷⁷.

It appeared to me that many independents enjoyed a great deal more freedom than most of the other employees directly under Sullivan Amusements' supervision. Although people who worked for the independents were just as vulnerable to being fired by Ron Sullivan (or the others) as anyone else, there seemed to be a degree of protection afforded them, in direct relation to the degree of status held by the independent owner. There was also frequent movement of employees among the independent operations⁷⁸: for example, a female might work

⁷⁷Money was often treated very casually, both in terms of "book-keeping" and in its actual handling. Paul Sullivan told me that carnivals did not start using banks until the 1980's. He told me that a few years ago, one of the senior carnival employees was carrying a garbage bag full of cash (\$67,000) across the midway, during the show. He struck up a conversation with somebody in the middle of the midway, and placed the bag on the ground. After finishing the conversation, he then carried on walking, having completely forgotten about the bag of money, ending up in the Pie Car and having a few drinks. It was only after the show closed for the night that he remembered the bag: it was still sitting where he had left it, in the middle of the midway, surrounded by other bags containing actual garbage.

⁷⁸There was, however, an unwritten rule that if any employee got fired, they were not permitted to work for someone else in the carnival unless the firing employer gave permission. And unless the fired employee did find employment elsewhere, they had to leave the carnival lot. There were several occasions where I observed fired employees being "escorted" off the lot, with the threat that, if they returned, they would get beaten (see Chapter Eight).

for awhile for one of the independent food joints, quit or be fired, and then find work in another independent joint.

XI. Ticket Sellers (all White females except for one Aboriginal female)

Another group of employees were the ticket-sellers (known as the "ticket broads" or "ticket bitches"), all of whom were female except for one, a twelve-year old boy (the son of Gary, one of the joint line owners) who worked part of the season during the summer months. The ticket-sellers, numbering about six in total, but varying from about two at the beginning of the season and towards the end of the season, were generally well-respected by most of the carnival workers and employers. Our working conditions were better than most, as we worked inside a ticket booth, often being partnered with another seller at the busier spots. There were usually two ticket booths set up (the carnival owned three), one amongst the bigger (adult) rides and the other in the kiddy ride section.

Our jobs consisted centrally of selling the tickets: single tickets which cost 75 cents each, a yellow "fun pack" of twenty tickets (\$13), and a blue "Family Pack" of 40 tickets (\$24). At larger spots, one day was often designated as "Kids' Day" when all children under the age of 13 could ride all the rides for two tickets each (normally, the larger rides cost five single tickets, the medium rides four tickets, and the "kiddy rides" three tickets). Also at larger spots, a "bracelet" day was designated: we sold bracelets (plastic wristbands) for \$20 (which we had to personally affix to extended arms through our ticket box slots) and the wearer could ride all day by showing their bracelets.

We also had to clean our ticket boxes, inside and out, often a messy job after a long jump through inclement weather. Armed with spray bottles of window cleaner and paper towels, we would scrub down the outside of the boxes. All the ticket boxes were in poor condition: drawers that were rusty and/or falling apart or did not even exist at all, doors that did not lock, and top windows that leaked (remedied by stuffing a green garbage bag over it on the outside). We also had to place wooden boards and flags on top of the ticket boxes (which most of us accomplished by commandeering an adjacent ride guy who would readily agree to clamber to the top aided by a rickety ticket box stool). The stools that we sat on were most uncomfortable and ergonomically challenging: some had backs on them but, in all cases, one had to lean forward to take money, and hand out tickets and change. We also had to “get power” which meant taking a long power cord, plugging it into the rear of the ticket box and then finding an available power source. This often meant crawling underneath a nearby ride (in the mud) and either connecting to an existing plug, or creatively finding another way of connecting to the nearest generator. Another of our job duties was to help “tear down the office” at the end of each spot, conducted approximately 45 minutes after the show closed (during which time Rachel and Cynthia collected the independents’ nuts). Tearing down the office consisted of dismantling the extremely heavy metal stairs and platforms, and removing the cumbersome belly cloth around the base of the office trailer, all of which had to be stored in the possum bellies (compartments) of the office trailer. Usually, this work was done in pitch dark with carnival trucks and the forklift rumbling by.

Ticket sellers were also frequently (and spontaneously) summoned to “clean the office”, or “clean Ron’s trailer” before the show opened. In the latter case, the reward was three free drinks in the Pie Car! Cleaning the office generally entailed washing the floor and windows; if the prior jump resulted in the office getting covered in dried mud, the cleaning also included scrubbing down the outside of the office trailer, another laboriously backbreaking job.

XII. Ride Guys (approximately 1/3 White males, remainder Aboriginal/Metis males)

This large group of 35 - 50 men⁷⁹ performed the most labour-intensive and time-consuming work in the carnival: setting up, running and dismantling the carnival rides. It is difficult to provide a precise number of these employees due to the high turnover rate, but about thirty were relatively consistent carnival employees. The remainder were people who would be hired at a spot, mainly by simply walking onto

⁷⁹During my eight months associated with Sullivan Amusements, I knew of only one female ride operator. She was hired at a spot towards the end of the season where they needed some extra ride workers as it was a very busy location. She was put to work on the kiddy rides, which are much smaller and less complicated to set up and tear down than the adult rides. Female ride operators were felt to be incapable of the heavy work involved in the rides. Also, according to John, the lot superintendent who did most of the ride guy hiring, “when you hire females on the rides, you’ve got problems. There’s the old hormone instincts and it usually ends up, she might end up with one guy in a cabana and then later jump into another cabana and then you get fights and problems. It’s a lot safer just to have guys” (Interview). The North Dakota Lot Superintendent offered a different rationale. I had commented on seeing some female ride operators on some of the kiddy rides at his carnival. His response was: “Yeah, we try not to be discriminatory, you know, in denying jobs. We put them to work on some of the smaller rides, some of the medium-size rides, where the work is not really hard, ‘cause there’s a lot of heavy lifting and things to do on some of the bigger rides and, you know, well, the way I was brought up, women shouldn’t pick up big heavy pieces of iron, you know, that’s the way I was brought up, so we don’t want to discriminate and say they can’t work on the rides, so we put them where they can’t really be hurt” (Marcus 77).

the lot, finding out whom to talk to, asking for a job and getting hired. Many of them did not even last the spot; others made it until the first teardown and then disappeared or were fired. The informal rule of thumb about a ride guy's longevity in the carnival was that if he survived the first three weeks, he would "make it", a concept explored further in Chapter Seven. Only three ride guys completed the entire eight-month season during the time that I was with Sullivan Amusements. The other veteran carnival workers who did not complete the season were fired towards the end of the season for being drunk on the rides, or simply not showing up for several carnival day openings.

An informal prestige system, similar to the one that I observed amongst the other groups of works, prevailed with the carnival ride guys. The ride guys with the most knowledge of the rides (having worked on most or all of them) were considered the most valuable employees. As a result, more leniency was often given to them as their expertise was needed. This fact was well-known by the veteran ride guys and they often used it to their advantage. I frequently observed seasoned ride guys coming back onto the lot, after a night on town, early in the morning and quite drunk. A newly-hired ride guy would have been fired on the spot, but the experienced ride guys were rarely punished in any form for this misdemeanor⁸⁰. Because of their

⁸⁰However, there were circumstances when even these guys were fired. An interesting example was the case of a veteran Aboriginal ride guy who appeared on the lot extremely drunk at opening time, about mid-way through the season. Although he was told to go back to his truck and 'sleep it off', he refused to leave his ride. Most other (more neophyte) carnival ride guys would have been fired on the spot. He pushed and pushed, by going to his truck and drinking some more, and returning to his ride. Eventually, the owners had no choice but to fire him. However, he appeared at the lot for the next spot and was re-hired. I observed two or three cases where this happened to veteran ride guys.

knowledge and, even more significantly, their friendships with other seasoned ride guys, their infractions were either ignored, or they were only mildly reprimanded. The friendships were important because the carnival owners knew that if they fired them, there was a strong possibility that two or three of their friends (also veteran ride guys) would quit also.

Most of the adult rides had two ride guys, one of whom was a foreman (usually self-named, rather than an official job title!), while some of the larger rides had crews of four or five men. The 'foreman' was a ride guy who knew the ride very well, and had worked on it (and others) for at least one month. The kiddy rides were looked after by a crew of (usually) younger ride guys, supervised by the kiddy ride foreman, a carnival veteran of about four years.

About six of the ride guys were also carnival truck drivers: they held Class I driver's licences⁸¹. The drivers were usually senior ride guys who were also considered to be the 'foreman' of their ride: the most seasoned and knowledgeable ride guys⁸².

XIII. Joint Lines (Owners: White males; Workers: White males and females (one

⁸¹The year I was with Sullivan Amusements was the first year that the owners actually required drivers to hold this qualification: in previous years, no Class I was required by the carnival, but the fines that the drivers often received as a consequence led to the carnival owners demanding this credential.

⁸²The drivers also tended to be the most trustworthy as well. In keeping with the carnival's cash-only policy, just prior to a jump, each driver would be handed an envelope that contained just enough cash for gas. For the long jumps, this amount would be quite a substantial amount (e.g. \$300). Although it did not happen while I was with Sullivan Amusements, Rachel told me that it was not uncommon for drivers to disappear with the money, the first indication of which would be a telephone call from a gas station or the police reporting a 'found' truck and carnival ride on the side of the road.

Aboriginal male)

The most prominent group of independents were the joint line owners who employed the joint bums. Sullivan Amusements had three main game joint lines that varied tremendously in size and quality. The most attractive joint line was owned by two men (Matt and Leo), and comprised several trailer (aluminum) joints, built on their own truck trailers, that were towed behind large pick-up trucks and vans on the jumps. These joints had electrical connections and were arrayed with lights and sound systems. Extremely profitable joints, this joint line moved out occasionally to join other large (often American) carnivals for two to three week periods. The game joint workers, numbering approximately twenty, were mostly agents (also known as "concessionaires").

The second joint line was a mediocre set of "stick joints" (wood and awning) owned by Leo's brother, Gary (mentioned above), and which stayed with Sullivan Amusements for most of its season, employing an ever-changing roster of about 15 to 20 joint bums. The third joint line was owned by Grant, who ran the Pie Car; the line itself was supervised by a foreman, Cece. This joint line was held in contempt by most of the other carnival workers, as it was made up of very old stick joints, and had cheap and tawdry "flash" and "stuffies". The 10 to 15 employees on the "Pie Car crew" (as it was known) were often quite young (14 or 15) males and females who were treated very poorly by the foreman.

I was told of numerous incidents of joint bums who tried to leave in the middle of the night, aware that their status was little more than that of an indentured slave, and owing large sums of money (see "Wages" below for more details). There was a

constant turnover of joint bums, with the exception of the higher-status and -quality joint line whose agents had been doing the job for years and who held great professional pride in their ability to make money (see Chapter Nine for more on the joint workers).

There were several types of games in Sullivan Amusements' various joint lines, most of which are mentioned in both Easto and Truzzi (1973) and Dembroski (1973). The main difference that I noticed between these renditions and my observations concerned the legitimacy of the games. Easto and Truzzi, as well as Dembroski, refer to the "gaffed" (rigged or fixed) character of many joints, and I found that most of the games at Sullivan Amusements were rigged. In my conversations with several joint bums and agents, I learned that, like many other aspects of the carnival, the joint owners have had to be much more vigilant (and creative!) about the rigged games in recent years due mainly to closer scrutiny by gaming officials⁸³.

The main job of the joint bums, upon arriving at a carnival spot, was to set up and clean their joints. Each joint line had a designated "foreman" whose job was to

⁸³One example of a rigged (gaffed) game was the duck pond. Customers paid \$3 to 'ensnare' one of about 20 plastic ducks floating in water. All the ducks were supposed to be marked either Small, Medium or Large, indicating a corresponding "stuffie" prize, the large being the most coveted. There were no ducks marked "L", and only one or two marked "M". This was discovered by undercover R.C.M.P. officers during a large exhibition. Immediately, a form of damage control was embarked upon by the show's administration. All the ticket sellers were told very angrily by Dwight not to talk to the press if we were approached. The duck pond game was immediately shut down and other joint owners/bums were told by Sullivan management that if any of their games were rigged, they would be thrown off the lot. I inquired subtly to find out if there were any other rigged games and, although the official word was that there were no more, I learned later, after gaining more trust with the joint bums and joint line foremen, that most were rigged or easily able to be rigged, as I discuss in Chapter Nine.

“flash the joints” meaning to supply each joint with the prizes, usually stuffed animals and, in the case of the “balloon stores”, supplies of balloons. The foreman also was in charge of telling the workers when they could “break” (usually only half an hour in an entire twelve or thirteen hour shift), and collecting the money from the workers’ aprons.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a largely descriptive, and by no means exhaustive, account of the those who variously owned and/or worked at Sullivan Amusements. By organizing the various groups of carnival owners and employees in rank order based on power and its resultant privilege (or the lack thereof), I have illustrated that those with the most power, which I have called the “royalty”, did indeed enjoy the greatest degrees of power and, as I show in the next chapter, their economic advantage permitted them to afford the most desirable and, in many cases, luxurious accommodations.

As one descended down the carnival hierarchy, however, the working conditions of the employees (particularly the ride guys and joint bums) deteriorated according to their marked lack of power in the carnival structure. This absence of personal autonomy for the carnival employees manifested itself in the almost feudal nature of the owner-worker relationship: workers were hired and fired with equal informality and adherence to convention and, indeed, law.

In the next chapter, I describe other aspects of carnival life that highlight the stratified structure within which carnival inhabitants lived and worked: the living quarters and washroom facilities available, hours worked, wages earned and, finally,

the gendered and racialized segregation found in the carnival.



Joint bums' "home" (called "Auschwitz" by joint line owner)



The Royalty's homes and pickup trucks

Chapter 5

Cabanas, Donachers, and "Native Boys": Carnival Homes, Amenities, and the Gendered and Racialized Aspects of the Carnival Hierarchy

My tent may no longer be standing (high winds). Lynn told me there was an empty truck sleeper, and to talk to Paul. Paul said sure but Bucky who was nearby said that someone's already using it, but that "Kenny's gone for a few days. His sleeper's empty". So when I left the ticket box on a break at 9:30 PM, I found it, an old GMC semi with a cabana in the back, sleeping 4 or 6 ride guys! It looked disgusting: old, filthy, small but when I crawled into bed in the tent, I said to hell with it: it was pouring, tent was leaking through the roof, wind howling. So I clambered what seemed like 300 feet up into the truck, hauling bedding, knapsack and peebowl/toilet paper. Couldn't get to sleep for ages: feeling overwhelmed, homesick for my comfy house, kids, dog. Feeling lost, lonely, dreading the eventual long drive to Manitoba. Basically wondering about my own sanity about being stuck in a stinky old truck sleeper, wondering what creepy-crawlies were going to invade my body and my bedding. Soggy tent, everything's very disorganized, can't afford a motel. And every time one of the cabana occupants got in, the whole cab shook like an earthquake. God, this is hell — how DO they stand it — how will I stand it for 2 ½ months? (Personal Notes 1-4)

Living Quarters and Accessibility to Showers/Washroom Facilities

The accommodations for carnival workers were as diverse as the work and workers. The royalty lived in their own large fifth wheel trailers, pulled by very expensive current-year (1996) Dodge Ram pick-up trucks. The fifth wheel trailers had every modern convenience, including televisions, VCR's, microwaves, furnaces and, for some, washers and dryers. As the occupants spent eight months a year on the road, many of them lived in these year-round, parking the trailers in mobile home parks in the Vancouver area over the winter months. Others maintained homes, rented out during the carnival season, to which they returned for the winter months.

Most of the independent owners, as well as one of the electricians and welder, lived in less comfortable conditions, ranging in size from small cramped

campers mounted on the backs of older pick-up trucks, to larger trailers towed by 10-ton trucks that usually held equipment. Again, there was a direct relationship between the longevity and, therefore, financial success of an independent and the kind of accommodation the independent was able to afford. During an interview with Claire, the wife of Gary (joint line owner), the graduation from smaller to larger accommodations over their three years with Sullivan Amusements was discussed:

Fiona: Your first year on the road, where did you live?

Claire: We lived in a truck camper. We weren't hooked up to anything. He [Gary] started off living in it. It was temporary, just a little kind of wooden box. They called it the Hilton [she laughs]. But it was temporary. This is much nicer.

Fiona: How long have you been in this [trailer]?

Claire: This is our third year (Claire 14).

All the independents had ready access to their own personal washrooms and showers in their various fifth wheels, motorhomes and trailers. In most spots, access to water taps was readily available for immediate hook-up. But even in the spots where there were no immediately accessible water taps, most of the independents were sufficiently knowledgeable of such sites, and filled their vehicles' water tanks in advance. They also brought their own generators, which they used when no electricity was available where they were loked.

The accommodations provided for employees of independents varied from quite comfortable bunks in the backs of vans or trucks, to the employees simply having to fend for themselves, on the ground in old sleeping bags and, occasionally, tents if they could afford to purchase one, or inside the joints themselves. (As most of the employees of independents did not have immediate access to washrooms or showers, I have included the procedure that they followed at the end of this section

on accommodations and facilities.)

Like the other independents, the joint liners' accommodations varied in relation to the quality and affluence of the joint line itself. Matt's crew, who were mainly agents, lived in the most luxurious accommodations available to carnival employees: two large mobile bunkhouses with individual rooms that had heat and electricity. There was a shower at the end of each bunkhouse, and each room in the bunkhouse contained a bed and a small dresser.

The mediocre joint line employees (Gary's joint liners) slept in the backs of three five-ton trucks that also held the equipment. These living arrangements were astonishingly crude and difficult: about six people slept on slabs of plywood covered with old, dirty and worn-thin foam mattresses. They had to provide their own bedding which mostly consisted of one very worn comforter or blanket. There was no heat or light, and the trucks leaked badly in the rain. One truck had a shower that was simply a water outlet with almost no privacy and only cold water (on the rare occasions that water was actually accessible and connected): both males and females shared these living quarters. On a stroll behind the joint line one evening, I took photographs of the truck, in full view of Gary, who made the following comments to me about the accommodations:

Fiona: Hi, Gary. I'm just taking some photos of these... What do you call them?

Gary: Bunkhouse, shower house. This is the house of the people that like world-wide adventure and money in the bank [laughing loudly]! Actually it's really Auschwitz. And we don't pay no taxes! (Gary 20)

I was quite astonished at Gary's usage of the term "Auschwitz" to describe his

crew's living quarters. He said it in a tone of levity and disgust, which indicated to me that he honestly felt that the accommodations were exactly what his employees deserved to live in. He quite happily agreed with my rather outspoken opinion that the living accommodations were extremely sub-standard, implying that it was the workers' own fault for creating their own vile living conditions.

The Pie Car crew slept in an old blue school bus which I never saw inside, but many of the joint bums said that it was filthy and cold inside the bus, and it also leaked. There were no shower facilities for these workers and they also had to provide their own bedding. The Pie Car crew foreman, in fact, shuddered when I asked him about the interior conditions of the blue bus, declaring that he opted to living in his van, along with his girlfriend and their infant daughter, rather than endure the conditions of the bus.

The ticket sellers slept in a variety of locations, mainly because most of the women were associated with one (or a series) of the male carnival workers. One seller slept in the sleeper cab of one of the large semi-trailer trucks, because she had a close friendship with the wife of the driver (one of the electricians). Two others shared a small wooden cabana, but routinely moved in with various male carnival workers as the season progressed. Yet another seller, picked up by the show towards the end of the season, slept on top of a freezer in the back of a five-ton truck. Although I was promised a "cabana" by the owners at the beginning of the research, I spent most of the season sleeping in my six-foot-wide dome tent and using my car (a Suzuki Samurai) as my own "fifth wheel" as I jokingly called it.

After the flooding tent episode (which resulted in me sleeping in a filthy truck

cab for two nights) in early July, I decided to be more aggressive in finding more suitable tent-sites. Instead of getting direction from Gary (the official loker), I would scope out each lot and find the most quiet and sheltered area to pitch my tent. I found that the 'best' tent spots were near the small corral set up by the husband-and-wife couple who had the pony rides. They needed a quiet spot for their animals, so, with their permission, I was able to set up camp in (usually) grassy, quiet areas.

I eventually obtained a cabana in the "floss truck" (the five-ton truck used to pull a candy floss/candy apple joint owned by Paul and Rachel), which did have a hand-made wooden bunk and was, at least, dry. I did learn, at the end of the season, that I could have had a cabana to myself much earlier if I had known whom to ask, who turned out to be the foreman of the kiddy rides, but I learned this information too late⁸⁴. I was also offered a bunk in one of the cabanas shared by two other ticket sellers but I declined as I enjoyed my independence, and I did not engage in the lifestyle of the other females (excessive drug and alcohol consumption and frequent sexual relations with male carnival workers and locals).

⁸⁴This was another example of the informal and, frequently, illogical (to me) methods by which knowledge was passed around the carnival. It was apparently quite common knowledge that Pete was the person with whom to speak regarding available beds in the carnival but no one had told me. I found out much later that the reason I was not told this was because rumour had it that I had been offered a truck trailer but had turned it down. I was, therefore, not told of any more available cabanas. I did prefer my tent, as it provided much more autonomy and independence. However, as the season progressed and the nights became very cold, I became quite anxious for dry and warm(er) 'lodgings'. I found, though, that, once I moved into the floss truck cabana, I lost much of my independence, as I kept my belongings in the cabana on the jumps and had to largely go where the truck went. In fact, I had many interesting experiences of waking up in the floss truck cabana on the first day after a jump, to find the truck moving, driving through the carnival lot, on its way to its final loker, disconcerting, to say the least, the first time it happened!

The ride guys slept mostly in hand-built rugged wooden or metal cabanas that were constructed behind the cabs of the semi-trailer trucks that pulled the rides. Not hooked up to heat or water, the cabanas were hand-made and were extremely primitive. They were nothing more than 6 foot by 6 foot boxes, with six wooden 'shelves' which served as beds. The ride guys kept their clothes in green garbage bags, as there was no storage of any kind. Only the truck drivers (most of whom were also ride guys) were permitted to sleep in the truck cabs; the truck drivers were a valued commodity to the carnival owners and were, therefore, given this privilege.

The ride guys, ticket sellers and employees of independents (including most joint liners) did not have readily accessible showers and washroom facilities. Several ride guys told me that there was something vaguely resembling a shower at the back of one of the trucks but that it was so filthy that people rarely used it. One of the first endeavours for the carnival workers at any new carnival spot was to locate the nearest showers, knowledge that was usually gained by inquiring with the carnival veterans who knew the route and its facilities. The available facilities ranged widely in both quality and proximity to the carnival lot. If the carnival was playing at a rural fair, the nearest showers were usually in a cowbarn, often at quite a distance from the lot. When the carnival played at shopping malls, showers were almost completely inaccessible to most of the employees who had no transportation. As one of the few employees with a vehicle, I was often able to leave the lot and drive to a nearby public swimming pool, hockey arena or truck stop to find a

shower⁸⁵.

Bathrooms (toilets⁸⁶) were often equally as difficult to access (or stomach!). At most of the carnival spots there were portable toilets but, by about the second day, they were almost unbearably smelly and dirty (and I quickly learned to always pack around my own supply of toilet paper!). At some of the mall locations, there were no portapotties, as the public was expected to use the indoor mall facilities. This proved to be a real difficulty when the mall did not open until 9:30 A.M. and was closed by 9:00 P.M. My first experience with this was at the mall where my tent flooded. I awoke on my first morning there not only surrounded in water but also desperate for a bathroom. Out of sheer necessity, I had to use a plastic bag, muttering to myself about the depths one must go all in the name of research! I dealt with the problem by purchasing a bowl with a plastic lid as my own personal toilet, hardly hygienic but better than a plastic bag. I observed that other carnival workers simply relieved themselves in the dark behind rides and games, there being nothing

⁸⁵One way I learned to gauge my degree of immersion into the carnival culture (which meant, to a large extent, becoming less connected to mainstream social rules) was my evolving attitudes towards nudity in the often cubicle-free showers at swimming pools. The first time I learned that these were the only accessible showers, I arrived at the public pool and saw with dismay the lack of privacy. Fortunately, I had my swimsuit in a box in my car, so I ran out, retrieved it, and put it on to have my shower (an exceedingly difficult task to get properly clean while wearing a swimsuit!). About three weeks later, we were at another spot where the public pools were the only available showers. When I got to the facility, I realized I had forgotten my swimsuit, but did have the shower anyway, feeling horribly exposed and embarrassed in front of the many other women and small children. Two weeks after that, in my third experience, I did not even care whether I had my swimsuit or not. I boldly stripped in front of a roomful of people, more interested in getting thoroughly clean than revealing my body to strangers.

⁸⁶The slang carnival term, used only by long-time Sullivan Amusements personnel, for toilet was "donacher".

else available⁸⁷.

Workers' Wages

Wages⁸⁸ were relatively standard throughout the carnival: \$350/week for most workers⁸⁹, with the exception of the joint workers who were paid on a percentage basis, a process that I describe later in this section. Ride guys who held Class One Driver's Licences and drove the trucks that carried rides earned \$400 a week, with one veteran driver earning \$450. This wage appeared to have remained the same for many, many years, according to one of the "lifers" (seasoned ride guys).

I did not learn how much the electricians were paid, but the welder, Scott, told me he earned \$550 a week and made even more money 'on the side' by doing jobs for the carnival royalty and independents on their private vehicles and equipment.

Ticket sellers at Sullivan Amusements were also paid \$350.00 a week but had the added "bonus" of being allowed to keep what are called "walkaways", which

⁸⁷It was also the case that many malls did not permit entry to the ride guys and joint bums because, according to Jim (ride guy), during a teardown, a joint bum went into a mall, lay down on a sofa in a furniture store and went to sleep. Carnival workers were also banned from some laundromats because a joint bum climbed into a dryer in a laundromat and had a spin. In many instances, though, according to Jim, malls simply consider ride guys and joint bums "too dirty"; this rule is enforced by Sullivan Amusements bosses who exact punishment if any worker is found 'trespassing' in forbidden malls and laundromats.

⁸⁸As a comparison, I offer the following figures (in U.S. dollars) given to me by the Lot Superintendent of the North Dakota carnival: Novice ride guys (called "roughies" in American carnivals) receive \$250/week; Veteran Ride Foremen receive \$800/week; and Ticket Sellers are paid \$175/week. I was given conflicting information on the salaries paid by other British Columbia carnivals: some people told me they paid less than Sullivan Amusements; others insisted they paid the same or slightly more.

⁸⁹It is important to point out that, although \$1400 a month may seem like a fair and reasonable wage, nearly all carnival employees worked at least 14 hours a day, seven days a week, with no days off at all for the full eight months, and with no scheduled coffee or meal breaks. Their hourly wage, consequently, worked out to less than \$4.00 per hour.

referred to change not picked up by customers when they bought their ride tickets. I was told by one of the ticket sellers with several years' experience that there are many gaffs worked by ticket sellers to cheat customers, from lying about the price of tickets, to hiding the change under the book of tickets. Our instructions were to always give the customer the tickets or ticket books first, followed by the change, ostensibly to ensure that the money was received before handing out the tickets. Very frequently, however, as soon as tickets were handed to a customer, the customer (especially a young, eager child) would run away. We were not permitted to leave our ticket boxes, and the noise of the midway covered up any futile yells to bring the customer back. We simply kept a pile of walkaway money beside us and if, by the end of the evening, the customer had not returned for his/her change, it was ours to keep⁹⁰.

All the waged carnival workers were given the option of having E.I. deductions taken off their wages (also always paid in cash) in the form of a flat \$50 every two weeks, or receiving the full amount, thereby not being able to collect E.I. Most workers opted for the latter because, even if the full number of weeks were worked to collect E.I., there was a delay of approximately six weeks before the E.I. checks began, and the new season is only a few weeks away. When I asked Jack,

⁹⁰Interestingly, I often made quite large sums of money on walkaways, and the general consensus was that this was due to the fact that I looked so "respectable" and, therefore, honest and trustworthy. At the most lucrative spot that the carnival played, where I sold \$21,000 in tickets in one day alone, I made \$250 a day in walkaways for the days we were at the spot. The largest single walkaway I received was \$50, when an extremely inebriated adult male gave me \$100 to purchase a large amount of tickets, and walked off into the crowds before I could give him the remainder of his change.

a ride guy, if he supported himself during the off-season with E.I., he responded with the following which was typical of most carnival workers' opinions regarding E.I.:

Yeah, UIC, if I'm not working, but they call us chronic abusers of the UIC system 'cause we're only seasonal workers. You're only working eight months out of the year and then by the time I argue with them about getting my claim, it's time to go back to work again (Jack 1).

Most of the carnival workers chose to be paid daily, in the form of drags.

They were permitted a maximum of \$30 each day that the show was open, with an increase of \$45 for a two-day jump to the next spot. If a worker needed to buy shoes or clothing, or needed money to pay for a medicine prescription, they were allowed to drag that amount also. Most of the workers lived, quite literally, from day to day — by the end of the actual pay period, their entire wages had already been given out in the form of the daily drags, given that most of them earned only \$350/week. In fact, Rachel told me that I was the only carnival worker who actually received full wages every two weeks.

Very few carnival workers ever left at the end of the season with any savings, and so most had to survive on Social Assistance during the winter months. Sullivan Amusements also had an informal "bonus" system which was simply a way to try to keep workers until the end of the season. During the season that I was with the show, only two workers received a bonus at the end of the year⁹¹, and many of the

⁹¹The year that I was with Sullivan Amusements was the worst, according to Ron Sullivan, in terms of weather and, therefore, revenue, that the carnival had ever experienced. Almost incessant rain, winds and very cold temperatures resulted in a higher-than-normal employee turnover. Many workers who ordinarily worked the entire season quit, either permanently or temporarily, thereby losing any chance at receiving their bonus.

workers were very angry, especially when the owner's son (Paul) brought a brand-new car onto the lot at the final spot and presented it to Rachel as a gift. Jack, one of the two who received the bonus, informed me that his bonus was usually \$1500, but that the normal amount was around \$500 or \$600. However, "[Sullivan] really likes me and I've been with them for so long, he still takes care of me bonus-wise" (Jack 1), an illustration of one of the forms of patronage by the carnival owners towards the more valued employees.

The joint liners were paid strictly by commission. They received "points" (percentage), usually 20% or 25% of what they took from the mooches. In the case of the second joint line, the owner, Gary, withheld 5% of their wages that was meant to be paid to them at the end of the season, as an incentive to stay. But, as I have already stated, during the season that I was with the carnival, the weather was consistently so poor, that often little or no money was made by the workers. In this case, the workers were allegedly "fronted" \$10 a day to buy food, but this money was deducted from any money that they did earn. However, I also learned that the \$10/day was conditional upon earning a minimal amount of money. Albert, a joint foreman, recounted how arbitrary the drags and wages for joint workers actually were:

Albert: Gary doesn't really put 5% on hold. He just kind of gives you, depending on how good you are, he gives you a daily drag, of \$10 or \$15, whether you're open or not. And any money you do make is just all put on hold. And then you get your daily drags. If you owe him money, then it's taken off. If not, it just keeps adding on and adding on.

Fiona: And how many points do Gary's workers get?

Albert: It can vary from 15% to 20%, depending on how good you are. If you're really experienced, then he has to pay you the 25%

and some guys even get 30%.

Fiona: So this money is held?

Albert: For those guys who are getting the higher percentage, they get paid every day. They get their whole end. They know better. It's the guys who come out that have no idea what's going on. They don't do that.

Fiona: These are the ones that are exploited.

Albert: Yeah. And the [other crew] is worse than [joint owner] is, because you have to put \$100 in your apron to get a \$10 a day drag on the days you're open. On the days you're not open, you just get a small drag.

Fiona: So what if you don't make \$100?

Albert: Then you don't get a drag. Nothing. But the other thing is, you work a whole spot, and you might make, say \$300, your end [meaning your percentage], for the whole spot. You don't see that until possibly half way through or the end of the next spot. That's where you might survive, 'cause you're getting your pay so that the days you're not open, you've got money to live off of.

Fiona: But would it be fair to say it's fairly arbitrary when you got this money? Like, it's not like clockwork, every two weeks.

Albert: No, it's not like clockwork at all. It's whenever he decides, whenever he feels like it.

Fiona: OK. Now we were talking yesterday about this real ripoff activity that goes on at the end of the year, when people think, especially the more naive ones, that they've got hundreds, possibly thousands, of dollars saved up, and then are presented with nothing?

Albert: Presented with maybe a couple of hundred, or a hundred, when they expected to get a thousand [dollars]. Then all of a sudden the boss comes up to them and says, well, we had to pay your taxes for the whole season, and that was \$900 and you owe me for this and that. All of a sudden, all these little things come up, and it's all just bullshit. It's just a way to save paying out so much money. It's a kind of con practice in the carnival business. Some of the bosses do that. They try to get everything they can get out of a person and give as little back as they have to (Albert 11-12).

No records were ever kept, and the joint bums were not allowed to count the money in their aprons, which was collected several times a day/night. Most of the joint bums on the second and third joint lines in fact owed several hundred dollars to their

employers by the mid-point of the season⁹².

Sometimes these workers would be "loaned out" to work at another ride or food joint, with an informal arrangement between both employers that any money earned would be returned to the first employer to pay off their debts⁹³. Very few of these workers even finished the entire season, with the exception of the top joint line which hired mainly agents who were highly skilled at making money and, as a result, were treated much better than the workers described by Albert above.

The "wages" for the members of royalty (and independents⁹⁴) were not made known to me. As already stated in the previous chapter, the independents paid a percentage to Sullivan Amusements: the remainder was theirs to keep. I was told that the employees of the independents received the same wage as other carnival workers: \$350 a week.

⁹²In August 1999, I was told by a reliable carnival source that two of Gary's joint bums officially complained to the Labour Relations Board over his advancement of monies to them, and then holding it over their heads to try and exact payment. The L.R.B. ruled that the money was given voluntarily by Gary and that he could not force them to repay it; Gary was ordered to pay these employees a sum of money. My source told me that Gary was quite shaken that someone would go to the authorities. These two people continued to work at the carnival, but only for a short time as Gary made conditions very difficult for them, and they were ostracized by the other carnival workers.

⁹³One of the ticket sellers with whom I was often paired was actually "owned" by one of the joint lines. Rachel decided the show needed another seller and so she made a deal with the joint line owner to "borrow" the worker; the joint line owner agreed on the condition that he could "pull her" any time he wished to "break" his other workers. At many of the busy spots, she worked continuously, back and forth between the ticket box and various game joints, with no time for food or bathroom breaks.

⁹⁴Unofficially, I was told by Chuck, an independent who owned a novelty joint and was a close friend of Ron Sullivan, that the independent ride owners and joint line owners would earn a profit of \$30,000 to \$40,000 over the season, while he expected to finish the season with about \$5000 (Chuck 20).

As for the royalty themselves, I do not know if they drew a wage per se. There is no question that the income from the rides and games was enormous. As previously mentioned, on one particular day, I personally sold \$21,000 worth of tickets and there were a total of four ticket sellers that day. Another indication of the royalty's income was the fact that the floss joint bought by Paul and Rachel was paid off in one season: the purchase price was \$100,000. And judging by the sumptuous fifth wheel trailers, brand new pickup trucks, Caribbean cruises taken by the royalty in the fall, and expensive clothing and jewellery, I can only assume that their personal incomes were quite generous⁹⁵.

Gender and Ethnicity

Throughout this chapter, I have made it quite evident that, with the exception of Lynn and Rachel, the carnival was largely run and operated by men. All the jobs in the carnival were highly gendered, meaning that one or the other gender was considered appropriate for most jobs. The only jobs considered to be appropriate for women were ticket selling, working in the floss and other food joints, and the office. There were some men who worked in the food joints, but the majority were female.

In the game joints, men were the preferred gender, although approximately one quarter of all joint bums were female, which I explore more fully in Chapter

⁹⁵An illustration of the amount of money taken in by a carnival is the following information given to me by a veteran joint line supervisor. He told me that another western Canadian carnival (larger than Sullivan Amusements) began the 1996 season \$2 million in debt, and had the debt fully paid off in four spots, which gives an indication of the income generated (Cece 15).

Nine. However, a general trend that I located was the avenue by which females entered the carnival. Most of the women and girls entered the carnival by way of an attachment to a male carnival worker, who would then make inquiries as to where a "hole" (job vacancy) might exist in a game or food joint. However, these efforts were often thwarted if the carnival bosses decided they wanted to fire the male employee: the following is an extract from my notes during the carnival pre-season (February to mid-April) where Sullivan Amusements hired and fired in rapid succession as they attempted to build a workforce "for the road":

This is the final spot before eight weeks on [area in British Columbia]. Rachel said five guys will be pink-slipped after teardown; they need them for teardown, of course — imagine being fired at 5 AM, after putting in a 17-hour day! Speculation among the guys: who will go? One is the guy on the Zipper [large adult ride]: surly, demanded his girlfriend get work, so says Rachel. Rachel said she [Rachel] went to all the food and novelty joints and told them not to hire her. Cynthia [other ticket seller] said this is normal. They weed out guys at this point in the year, pick more guys [over the next 8 weeks], lose even more [over that same time period] and have the crew finalized by the end [of the 8 weeks] who will, hopefully, stay with them all the rest of the season (Personal Notes, p. 7).

This strategy of banning independents from hiring female employees in order to ensure the disappearance of fired male workers was a common occurrence and demonstrates the power that the senior Sullivan Amusements personnel had over the independents and who they could or could not hire.

With regard to race, almost all Sullivan Amusements owners and workers were White, the only non-White workers being Aboriginal or Metis with no other racial groups represented. I observed racial segregation: nearly all the Aboriginal or Metis workers were ride guys (males) and one ticket seller was an Aboriginal

female. About half-way through the season, her two sons (Metis) joined the carnival when it played in their hometown, with one working as a Kiddy Land ride guy and the other as a joint bum.

It is difficult to give precise numbers of Aboriginal and Metis workers for two reasons. The first was the transience of workers in and out of the carnival, and Rachel kept no official records of employees (that one would almost certainly find in more conventional work locations). Ride guys tended to move among the rides quite regularly, the most common reason being that someone had quit or been fired (or simply vanished for a week or two) and the bosses needed to accommodate their absence. Workers were listed by first name only on a sheet of paper (hand-written) in the office, grouped according to the ride they worked on, or their particular job (e.g. ticket sellers). This was to keep a running tab of their daily drags in order to ascertain their wage (if any) at the two-week pay periods. However, from my observations, I found that the two major rides (the Sky Diver and the Gravitron), which were also considered the most prestigious rides to work on, had crews almost completely comprised of Aboriginal and Metis men. Other Aboriginal and Metis men worked alongside White men at other rides, and approximately half the Kiddy Land ride guys were young Aboriginal and Metis men. But this segregation was not racially-based. Rather, the ride guy job progression was that, in most cases, ride guys began work on the smaller Kiddy Land rides, and then moved over as vacancies occurred onto the larger rides. Given that the Aboriginal and Metis men had the longest work histories with Sullivan Amusements, they also experienced the most upward job mobility in ride guy work (which certainly gave them higher status in

the ride guy hierarchy but no concomitant wage increase). The other difficulty in offering precise numbers of non-White ride guys was that many of the Metis did not appear to be Aboriginal at all, and I only discovered their racially-mixed status through interviews and casual conversations with them. A very rough estimate of the numbers of Aboriginal and Metis ride guys, based on my observations and interviews, would be 25 or 30, out of a total ride guy work force of approximately 50 men⁹⁶.

Although during my eight months with Sullivan Amusements, I did not observe, nor was I told about, any form of racial discrimination, Aboriginal and Metis men were considered to be ideal workers, illustrated in the following comment by John, the Lot Superintendent who hired and fired most of the ride guys:

A lot of native boys out here, it's discrimination I would say, but most of these native boys out here I would take them and work with them any time... Their loyalty is good. [I then make a comment about discrimination against aboriginals in the general labour market.] Metis, it's worse, yeah (John 24).

Most of the Aboriginal or Metis men were originally hired in the north-eastern Manitoba area (Cree) where Sullivan Amusements' circuit used to extend in past years, and had been with the carnival for several years.

I spoke to many carnival workers about the issue of race, and all declared a complete lack of prejudice (not surprisingly, of course). With such a relatively homogeneous ethnic group in the carnival, I did not have any opportunities to

⁹⁶The significance of this proportion of Aboriginal and Metis men becomes even more pronounced in light of the fact that only 2.8% of the Canadian population (in 1996) was Aboriginal or Metis (Statistics Canada 1998).

observe behaviour that might have contradicted their spoken words. I did speak to many of the Metis and Aboriginal workers about whether they felt they experienced any discrimination in the carnival and most of them expressed relief that they had found work at all, declaring that Sullivan Amusements was one of the few places that would hire them. Arty, a Metis Kiddyland ride guy, mentioned his experiences of job discrimination in our interview:

Fiona: Why do you think there are so many natives working in the carnival?

Arty: Well, Metis, they have it rough. We don't have our treaty rights, but we're fighting for them, and maybe one day we'll get it. Right now, there's a law, well, it's not a law yet, but I think there's \$56 million set aside for the Metis to get our land, our hunting rights.

Fiona: So am I correct in understanding that there's not a lot of jobs available for Metis?

Arty: Right!

Fiona: There's a lot of discrimination?

Arty: Lots. And the carnival is one place where we can find work (Arty 14).

Workers' ethnicity in the carnival, like many other personal characteristics, was deemed largely irrelevant to the social relationships amongst the workers themselves. Due to the rigidly nepotistic system of privilege and upward mobility in the carnival, it would be highly unlikely for any of the Aboriginal or Metis workers to have achieved more prestigious positions (other than working on the largest carnival rides). However, the limited employment opportunities had little to do with racism, as such, as all workers, unless related to or in a romantic/sexual relationship with, a member of the incumbent carnival royalty, had equally as limited chances for upward mobility. Of more significance was the willingness and ability to work hard under very difficult conditions, qualities of protest masculinity that appeared to be

even more pronounced among the Aboriginal and Metis male workers (who were almost all extreme drug and alcohol users), explanations for which were found in many of their fractious life histories of violence, dysfunctional family backgrounds and substance abuse. However, at the risk of reifying this racialized⁹⁷ aspect of a particular group of workers, I need to point out that all the most dedicated carnival workers (especially the ride guys) had similar backgrounds, regardless of race. The main distinction between White and Aboriginal/Metis workers was that the latter group tended to remain with the carnival for longer periods, and their accumulated knowledge of carnival rides placed them in positions of higher value by the carnival bosses, who frequently overlooked their occasional short-term disappearances (which were often to attend court elsewhere).

Regarding the absence of Aboriginal and Metis joint bums (other than the one mentioned above), the only explanation that I can offer is that hard, physical labour (e.g. ride guy work) was the kind of work that they appeared to seek. None of the ride guys (regardless of race) had any interest whatsoever in working in the joints, citing that they preferred the heavy manual labour involved in ride guy work. Another factor concerned age: most joint bums were much younger than the ride guys (other than the Kiddy Land ride guys). Joint bums tended to be young males and females aged 14 through to about 20, with little or no previous job experience, whereas ride guys were more likely to be men in their mid to late 20's through to their late 40's, with many years of experience in either a carnival or other (non-

⁹⁷See Chapter Six for further discussion on race and racialization.

credentialed) manual labour jobs (e.g. truck driver, construction, factory work, farming) that provided them with technical knowledge easily adapted to carnival work.

Conclusion

As the above description of owners' and workers' accommodations and wage structures demonstrates, Sullivan Amusements is a workplace (and living place) characterized by social and economic relations based largely on differential degrees of material ownership and familial connection. I have shown that the disparities between the carnival owners and carnival workers were entrenched in a system that clearly served to benefit the owners monetarily. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I discuss the rapidly changing social and economic environment for carnivals and its implications for Sullivan Amusements, all of which may force the carnival to improve the living conditions for their workers, if the show survives economically.

In Part II of this thesis, I begin with a discussion of masculinities, in particular, the role of protest masculinity in sustaining and perpetuating the work and social relations that underscored the workers' subjective understandings of their experiences. The remainder of Part II examines some of the key substantive elements of protest masculinity that intertwine with issues of race, class and gender.



Gravitron ride guys (man on right is author of Lot Call poem at the end of this thesis)



Two floss chicks and a veteran carnival dog at the back of a floss joint

Part II

Chapter 6

Dee-Effers, Lifers, Lot Lice and Princesses⁹⁸: Theorizing Working Class Masculinity

We're all outcasts from society. Society doesn't want us. Most of us wouldn't be able to hold down a job without the carnival. I mean, hell, if they ever had mandatory drug testing in Canada, we'd all be hooped! Everybody does drugs out on the carnival. I can think of two that I know of that don't do drugs. That's it. Here there are no risks. It's a place for outcasts to come when you got no place else to go. A lot of the workers, they live at Winter Quarters at the end of the season. They have no place else to go. This is their home, their family. You could probably correspond a lot of the brotherhood and the camaraderie in the carnival to say a biker gang, where all the bros are looking out for one another. They'll squabble and fight amongst themselves, but fuck with us and we'll all band together and fuck you over big time (Cece 34-20).

Introduction:

In Chapter One, I stated that, for the first couple of days, I felt a sense of discomfort and alienation from the other workers, which I attributed to my strong personal response of feeling somehow very different from everyone else. I had

⁹⁸These terms refer to the continua of values inherent in the masculinities and femininities assigned to workers in Sullivan Amusements. The first pair (used to describe male workers) denotes the commitment to work that is attached to all male workers: "dee-effers" (short for "dogfuckers") were workers deemed to be lazy, whereas "lifers" were men who had worked for many years in the carnival and were considered reliable and dedicated. "Lot lice" (or "lot lizards") were females who entered the carnival via an attachment (usually informal, sexual and not long-lasting) to a male worker. "Princess" had two inter-connected meanings, discernible by the tone of voice of the user. As a compliment, "princess" was a term of respect for a woman who held high status in the carnival, and who displayed and received overall respect (I was called "Princess" on several occasions in this manner). "Princess" spoken with sarcasm ("Yeah, she thinks she's a real princess now!") was an epithet applied to women who 'put on airs' and disassociated themselves from the other workers, a situation which often occurred (albeit temporarily after she would be soundly told off by other female carnival workers) when a female began a sexual/romantic relationship with a male worker of a status higher than that of most of the workers. Male values were work-related; female values were based on a combination of sexuality and display of appropriate class-based behaviour.

come immediately from the university environment, where my gender, race, class and sexual orientation were never issues of concern for me personally. This is not to ignore issues of systemic discrimination in terms of hiring, promotion and other lived realities of gender and race bias such as homophobia and racism for many students and faculty who do not conform to the expectations of the university culture. But on a lived, day-to-day basis, my being White, female, heterosexual and of a social class that vacillated between working- and middle-class were, for the most part, rarely scrutinized and reified and, as a result, mostly inconsequential to how I behaved as an individual and interacted with my peers and faculty.

It was something of a shock, therefore, to experience such a degree of difference that extended beyond just feeling 'too clean' in comparison with the other carnival workers. Instead of the overall sensation of androgyny that I felt at the university, I realized I was experiencing a strong sense of *being female*. By this, I mean I became very aware of my body, how I was dressed, and whether or not I "looked attractive". This certainly was not a new sensation for me. It was highly reminiscent of my years of employment in, mainly, White male-dominated workplaces where everyone was employed in rigidly gendered and racialized jobs. But my years at university had, in many ways, laid dormant much of the working-class social rules and behaviours that had been my experience and practice for so many years.

However, I was able to draw easily upon the knowledge of past experience to participate in the social relations of where I had found myself — in a work environment where gender, in particular, was a profound organizing agent of not

only work but, more significantly, everyday social interactions between and among all levels of workers.

As the days passed at my first carnival spot, the marginalization I initially experienced began to slip away. In retrospect, I realized that my being accepted into the carnival culture (and really feeling that acceptance) was founded upon those four very important criteria mentioned above: race, class, gender and sexual orientation. If I had been Indo- or Asian-Canadian, I doubt that I would have been accepted so readily, given that the majority of the workers and owners were White. White was considered the norm, although First Nations people were also considered culturally acceptable personnel as well, a point explored in Chapter Five.

The main initial barrier to my being accepted was my social class. I went into the first carnival spot looking and feeling decidedly middle-class. I spoke to people the same way that I would at the university or in any new social situation. I introduced myself by extending my hand, smiled politely if reservedly, and felt myself walking rather self-consciously, under the gaze of the other carnival workers. The comment from the carnival worker that I looked like a mother (mentioned in Chapter One) summed up how I was first perceived: wholesome, rather asexual, and, above all, respectable. It was only after I had been befriended by Jim, also mentioned in Chapter One, that my 'mother-ness' disappeared and, with it, the label of sexual neutrality.

Intertwined with my social class was my sex, out of which flowed (to the workers) my perceived gender and sexual orientation. With the social and gender classification of "mother" comes an implicit designation of heterosexual. I am,

indeed, heterosexual (and a mother) but the workers did not know this.

Nonetheless, I was treated as if I were a heterosexual woman by the mostly male carnivals workers (wolf whistles, requests for dates, compliments about my body, queries about whether I had a 'boyfriend'). I never responded to any of these sexual overtures with horror or disgust. They were only rarely extended in a manner that I found offensive. I was in familiar terrain. This was no different than working in a pulp mill or a police station or a fire department⁹⁹. And, of course, the "sociologist" in me was operating side-by-side with the now rapidly-resuscitated "working-class White female". Over those first few days, I did wonder on several occasions how I might have felt if I had been homosexual. Would I have been offended by the comments and open stares of appreciation by the male workers? How would I have coped with the flirtations? Would a homosexual researcher have had to play the role of "being heterosexual" in order to be accepted? And, finally, if I were male, would this have impeded or accelerated my acceptance into the carnival culture?

Fundamental to all these early experiences in the carnival was my growing awareness that *being a heterosexual, White female mattered*, in a very real way, regarding how I was treated and how I was expected to behave. Equally as important was that my Whiteness and my ability to draw upon my pink-collar

⁹⁹My 'acceptance' of the flirtations by the male carnival workers needs to be understood in the context of a working-class culture, where flirting with the opposite sex is an integral part of the highly gendered social culture and communications system therein; men and women both flirt with each other. Other than at the very beginning of my entry into the carnival, I knew all the workers and interpreted their sexualized compliments as an indication of my acceptance. I frequently pondered the social construction of flirting as communication (vs flirting as sexual harassment), mentally visualizing how I might react if a stranger, graduate student or faculty member said the same thing to me in the halls of the university — horror and outrage!

experiences of working with, and often for, blue-collar men were crucial to my behaviour and ultimate acceptance into the carnival culture.

The aforementioned description of my emotions, experiences and questions sets the tone for the remainder of this chapter, in which I explore the concept of masculinities, as masculinist practices and beliefs pervaded the carnival, sustaining and perpetuating the way that the workers and owners (both male and female) perceived their work, their social interactions and their very reasons for working in the carnival. I hasten to add, however, that it is not the construct of masculinity, and its various forms, alone that created the structural, political and social relations of the carnival. Femininity was also a critical element that helped to sustain the masculinist practices and will also be discussed.

Before I begin to unpack the various and intertwined concepts of gender, race and class, however, I need to declare that I had great difficulty finding relevant studies that exactly replicated my findings, especially with regard to social relations among and between working-class men and women. Most of the existing studies focus on the work place which is, indeed, a fertile and practical location to observe working-class relations and the dynamics of gender, race and class enmeshed therein. After much angst, and laborious ploughing through the library, I realized that the reason for not being able to locate any studies with findings/analyses that matched my observations directly was that the carnival was, indeed, a most unique environment. It was a *work place*; however, to the workers themselves, the work itself was secondary to the *social place* that it provided for them.

The crucial difference was that most non-carnival workers go home at the

end of the day. There is a clear physical separation between the work and home. But in the carnival, there was no such separation — physically, temporally, or socially. Almost twenty-four hours a day/night, seven days a week, for eight months of the year, they were constantly “carnies”. Being a “carny” meant much more than being a waitress, or a firefighter, or retail clerk, or assembly-line worker for a limited number of hours a day. The nomenclature of “carny” denoted a totality of experience and identity, found only rarely in other occupations, such as the military, isolated logging camps or cruise ships.

The other key distinction was that the carnival workers, despite the deplorable working conditions, did not consider their work to be an undue hardship, reflecting the pragmatism frequently found in working-class culture (Secombe and Livingstone 1996:180). My interviews with the 35 workers, along with the numerous informal conversations I had with them and many others, showed that the work conditions were treated in a very taken-for-granted kind of way. They rarely resisted the bosses’ manifestos of long hours, very difficult working and living conditions, low pay, lack of healthy food, no real time off, and verbal and physical treatment that was frequently very abusive. This is not to say that they accepted these conditions stoically or philosophically without complaint. Indeed, they frequently complained but, somehow, the ire was remarkably short-lived and rarely directed at the carnival owners.

Their subjective interpretation of events and conditions was that this was simply the way the world operated. In every discussion/interview I had with the carnival workers where I asked what they liked the most and the least about the

carnival, the response was always the same. They most enjoyed the camaraderie and sense of family that they found in the carnival¹⁰⁰; first on everyone's list of "dislikes" were the lack of showers and generally tough living and working conditions. But they always added a caveat that the difficulties were far outweighed by the benefits. Those who did not like the conditions simply quit or were fired¹⁰¹. Therefore, the position that much of the working-class culture is formed in terms of resistance to administrative or managerial staff (i.e. those with power) simply did not fit in the carnival.

What I did find, however, was much evidence of an overall disgust for the general public, as if *they*, rather than the carnival owners, were the ones to be disdained. Yet this attitude had nothing to do with envy for the general populace who appeared to have more social and financial capital at their disposal. The disdain was grounded in a sentiment of stupidity directed at the customers and their willingness to part with their money. The derision was also a response to the "softness" seen as inherent in people who were clean, tidy and well-nourished, yet another manifestation of the (mainly masculinist) working-class ethic that a person's real worth lies in their ability to "take it", a theme explored later in this thesis.

Despite the lack of studies that directly corroborate my findings as a totality, I

¹⁰⁰The second most enjoyable aspect of the carnival for those interviewed was always the travelling and "seeing the country" which I privately found to be quite ironic: most of the carnival jumps took place in the pitch dark of night-time, and the routes were invariably over back roads and secondary highways in order for the trucks to avoid having to go to government weigh scale stations (the trucks were always well over the legal weight limitations). Additionally, many of the workers travelled in the backs of trucks or vans and did not even have the opportunity to "see the country" whether it was night or day.

¹⁰¹In Chapter Seven I explore this further.

did find it most useful to re-visit Bob Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, as nearly all studies that focus on the salience of masculinities use as their starting point Connell's (1987 and 1995) works, and most contemporary gender scholars generally agree that his concepts on gender are both inclusive and theoretically sound.

I begin with a discussion of the usefulness of feminist theorizing in a study of cultural practices such as this. I then explore the issue of hegemonic masculinity, first, as an analytical concept and, secondly, as it is formed in the carnival. Building from this, I look at a particular form of working-class masculinity — protest masculinity — and how it manifested itself in the work and social lives of the carnival workers. Included in all these analyses are the concepts of race, class, femininity, homosexuality and homophobia, which run through and shape the various renditions of masculinity. In the rest of this chapter, then, I explore each of these areas, pointing out the locations where my findings depart from those of others, and where they converge.

Feminist Theorizing of Working-Class Culture

The inclusion of gender in cultural studies has been a relatively recent development in social science, specifically those that move away from the historically dominant practice of either androgyny (found most commonly in positivist accounts) or essentialism, which dichotomizes men and women as polar opposites both conceptually and empirically. Positivist studies also simply bifurcate the categories of men and women into useful statistical cohorts, and the problem with both essentialist and positivist accounts is that they do not recognize the distinction

between sex and gender, what Munt bluntly refers to as “the enduring glue of gender to genitals” (Munt 2000:87). Flowing out of the fusion of sex and gender, and binary reductionism, is the inability to accommodate or even acknowledge the multiplicities of gender; in other words, to recognize that men and women rarely display such discrete attributes that are socially defined as either ‘masculine’ or feminine’ (Connell 1995; Cheng 1999b; Halberstam 1998¹⁰²).

It is certainly useful to study gender as a *conceptually* distinct entity (just as one might study social class and race), but none of these phenomena exists external to the individual, and they certainly do not exist as separate entities in actual social practice. Gender, race and class create social practice, and social practice in turn reinforces the salience of these elements primarily in the realm of relations of power. To properly understand how gender works in organizing people’s social action and interaction, a paradigm that is able to capture all of the various elements — gender, race, class, power, and social practice — is needed.

Feminist research offers the most useful framework for investigating such practices as it recognizes the variety and inter-connections between race, class and gender. Furthermore, it places these relations in historical and social conditions, showing that people construct gender, race and class in particular social situations, over both time and place (Archetti 1999; Connell 1995; Vale de Almeida 1996). Rather than searching for a grand theory that attempts to account for social behaviour displayed by men and women (and, logically, therefore ignoring the

¹⁰²Halberstam examines female masculinity in her text, but limits her discussion to the variety of masculinities performed by lesbian women.

differences between people over time and place), feminist theory allows us to concentrate on specific social and historical conditions to learn more about the diversity that lies within the social relations of gender. By bringing in men's (and women's) standpoints along with issues of gender and power, feminist theorizing allows the researcher to examine men's emotions, to study men in group situations, and place their experiences within a structural context (Coltrane 1994:55).

The focus of this thesis is masculinity in the carnival, how it is manifested in the workers' behaviour, how it helps to organize the way work is done and perceived, and how it is both exploited and, simultaneously, contained by the owners of the carnival. I use the term 'masculinity' here in a conceptual sense but, in the lived social relations of the carnival, it is a significant force in the lives of everybody in the carnival: men and women; heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual; White, Metis and Aboriginal; owners and workers. I will show that all of these various groups organized and understood their social and work worlds through a variety of understandings of what it means to be a man, and I include women also: femininities were equally constructed around 'what it means to be a man'. The carnival was overwhelmingly male-dominated numerically, but the masculinities and femininities performed by the carnival owners and workers — both male and female — were numerous, varied and always in relation to situations of power and privilege.

Hegemonic Masculinity

In this section, I discuss the concept of hegemonic masculinity, referring to the literature on masculinity by R.W. Connell (1987 and 1995) and Paul Willis (1977). I then concentrate on Connell's arguments concerning working-class males

and a particular form of masculinity: protest masculinity, "a marginalized masculinity which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in a context of poverty" (Connell 1995:114). I have selected this form of working-class masculinity to expand upon as it is most applicable to the carnival culture.

Although Willis (1977) does not use the term "protest masculinity" in his study of British working-class youths, Connell's (1995) definition of the term clearly covers the version of masculinity developed by the boys that Willis examines as they try to reconcile their social and economic limitations and resultant resentments by constructing their gender identity from these truncated reference points. Therefore, I also make links between Connell's protest masculinity and Willis' analyses of working-class masculinity.

To fully understand the concepts of hegemonic and working-class/protest masculinities, it is important to define what is meant by "masculinity". In *Masculinities* (1995), Connell examines various definitions of the term that arise out of particular "strategies" (Connell 1995:68) to grapple with the masculine character. He concludes that the semiotic approach is the most useful as it places masculinity in a set of social relations: put simply, "masculinity is...defined as non-femininity" (Connell 1995:70). Masculinity, then, is the bench-mark, as it were, against which femininity is measured and constructed in several guises. The key idea in this definition of masculinity is that masculinity is a symbol that exists among other symbols. There is no masculinity except as it exists in gender relations and, therefore, gender practice (Connell 1995:70/71).

In *Gender and Power* (1987), Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as

...a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes. Ascendancy of one group of men over another achieved at the point of a gun, or by the threat of unemployment, is not hegemony. Ascendancy which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies, and so forth, is. (Connell 1987:184).

Connell points out three very important elements to hegemony. The first is that, although the subordination of men and women by men through force does not constitute hegemony, there may very well be force used to *impose* the dominant group's will (Connell 1987:184). The second element of hegemony is that the subordinated groups rarely accept in toto the ascendancy of others (Connell 1987:184). The relationship between controlling and controlled amounts to a constant striving for a balance, within which lies potent terrain for contestation and change. The subordination, therefore, is never complete, in the sense that the resistance against the oppressed group is never eliminated entirely.

The third theme in hegemonic masculinity is that its prototype, or idealized version, rarely actually exists, other than perhaps in the form of professional male sports figures. As Connell states, "...the winning of hegemony often involves the creation of models of masculinity which are quite specifically fantasy figures, such as film characters played by Humphrey Bogart, John Wayne and Sylvester Stallone" (Connell 1987:184/5). The image of masculinity, within the hegemonic definition, therefore, is a social construction, an idealized form that draws upon myth and cultural beliefs, but towards which all practitioners of hegemonic masculinity draw their inspiration, and from which form their emulation.

An important contribution that Connell makes towards our understanding of hegemonic masculinity (as well as all other conceptual delineations of masculinity, e.g. working-class, or black masculinity) is that there is no singular form of these categories of social male-ness. While it may be useful to refer to them as a singular entity for conceptual or analytical purposes, as soon as we examine men in a particular social context, we must also take into account those males' class and race positions, as well as their sexual orientation, in order to understand the true nature of the gender relations. Hegemonic masculinity is not a rigid categorization. It is a "historically mobile relation" (Connell 1995:77) that alters according to the foundation upon which the male dominance rests.

Male dominance is usually asserted and maintained through violence, which can range from domestic abuse, to the waging of war, to techniques of harassment and intimidation (against women) in the form of comments and whistles (Connell 1995:83). The need for men to continuously *re*-assert their hegemonic control, then, highlights the conflictual element of gender relations. The oppressed (whether women or marginalized/subordinated masculine groups) rarely fully accept the attempts of the dominant group to impose their will. And it is within this struggle that we are able to locate the intricacies of gender relations that are comprised of both accommodation and resistance.

Working Class/Protest Masculinity

As mentioned above, working-class masculinity(ies) are largely formed around the contradictions inherent in the relations of accommodation and resistance to the dominant group (usually also male). Gender, race and class are rooted in

social practices in specific locations, and shape such practices in relations of reciprocity (Messerschmidt 1993:127). Men and women, even in the most socially oppressive situations, do feel they have some control over their social action, but their behaviour is strongly informed, and limited, by elements of their social structure, such as issues of power, sexual orientation and the division of labour.

Usually enmeshed within socially oppressive structures, the working class is cited by Connell as a location where the intersection of gender and class allows a more accurate understanding of masculinities. Just as Willis (1977) argues in *Learning to Labor*, Connell posits that working-class masculinities are characterized by responses to class subordination and the experiences of working with overbearing managers. A further aspect of a working-class masculine construction is the acceptance by the working-class members of the image of themselves that is imposed by the dominant class. Working-class masculinity, then, is comprised of a contradictory set of social and gender relations that, simultaneously, resist and absorb the hegemonic demands of the more privileged classes (Connell 1995; Willis 1977).

Borrowing from Alfred Adler's (1992[1927]) concept of masculine protest, Connell's term of "protest masculinity" refers to a type of working-class masculinity embraced by males in powerless positions (Connell 1995:111). It is a type of masculinity that emphasizes the body as a tool for work, violence and sex, as opposed to a mental or more cerebral characterization of masculinity. In Chapter 4 of *Masculinities*, entitled "*Live Fast and Die Young*", Connell (1995) provides brief life stories of some men who represent protest masculinity. Although he does not

specify characteristics of protest masculinity in a general sense, a useful set of criteria is provided by Broude (who also refers to it as "hypermasculinity"): physical aggression, destructiveness, crime, drinking, boasting, and sensitivity to personal criticism (Broude 1990:110).

In Connell's analysis of the men who display protest masculinity, he poses the following question: If masculinities are constructed in response to capitalist work conditions and locations, what is the effect — during economic downturns when unskilled jobs become intermittent and scarce — on the construction of those masculinities (Connell 1995:94)? It is in this particular chapter, in which Connell analyzes the situation of a masculinity that is constructed largely in the context of tangible external conditions, that I located the only empirical description that most closely resembled that of most of the male (and many of the female) carnival workers.

Admittedly, Connell's brief but illuminating case studies examine the situation of men who, in better economic times, would undoubtedly have developed a labour record of serial unskilled jobs and it is only because of the dearth of these jobs that they find themselves marginally and/or sporadically employed. This differs from the situation of the carnival workers who chose to work in the carnival rather than in other labour areas that may or may not have been impacted by an economic crisis. Many of the carnival employees had work records prior to carnival employment that contained huge gaps, for reasons *other than* national economic downturns: lengthy prison terms, inability or unwillingness to work in conventional work locations, severe alcohol and/or drug addictions, mental illness, severely fractured or non-existent

families and other psycho-social barriers to gaining employment in more orthodox work settings. A strength to this thesis, consequently, is that it adds to Connell's argument that protest masculinity, probably the most marginalized of masculinities, is constructed in response not only to the conditions of difficult and unskilled labour, but also in response to poverty, an almost inevitable consequence of working in under-valued and low-paid jobs.

Connell's analysis ties in closely with Willis' (1977) meticulous examination of the meanings attached to manual labour that illuminate the weaving of gender and class to create a specific kind of masculinity that serves to justify and, simultaneously, rebel against the social and economic conditions of inequality that give rise to the very relations of power that the male workers attempt to negotiate. Although Willis does not frame his ethnographic study of British working-class males within a strictly masculinist set of parameters, it is his detailed description of the boys' attitudes and reactions towards the middle-class culture within which they must work that one is able to state, unequivocally, that Willis is not just talking about any kind of masculinity, nor any kind of working-class masculinity, but a particular form of working-class masculinity that is formed in reaction to the most oppressive and demeaning conditions of education and work.

If one places the situation of the carnival workers within the context of Willis' (1977) arguments about differentiation, the question of why some workers chose to work in such difficult low-paid jobs begins to be answered. Masculinities are formed not in relation to particular work locations but in relation to the entire labour market. In the case of unskilled men who occupy places on the outskirts of the labour

market, the pattern of sporadic employment creates a situation of constantly "living on the edge" of abject poverty. This situation combines with the dominant (and employing) class's attitude towards unskilled labourers as replaceable and, indeed, interchangeable with any other unskilled worker. The workers themselves see both jobs and employers as equally generic. The result is a formation of masculinity that has roots in an acute skepticism of dominant institutional practices and expectations but that is accompanied by a resignation that manifests itself in techniques of accommodation and resistance to the power of those institutions.

A significant point that both Willis (1977) and Connell (1995) make is that protest masculinity is a collective endeavour that is an attempt to present to the world a show of strength or "a pressured exaggeration of masculine conventions" (Connell 1995:111) that develops out of experiences of poverty and violence. A claim to power, then, is made by the practitioners of protest masculinity. And this claim to power is directly proportionate to the degree of lack of any actual power that they might hold. It is a facade in every meaning of the word: an image of hegemonic masculinity that is shown to the rest of the world but a rendition of idealized masculinity that is created in a context of impoverishment.

In an examination of working-class masculinity, Donaldson (1991) explores the effects of powerlessness, or "the appreciation of failure" (Donaldson 1991:10) on working-class men, agreeing with Willis (1977) that the process of differentiation originates in school, where boys begin to develop their masculine protest behaviour in the form of smoking, drinking, drugs, sex and truancy. Most of the carnival workers and owners (both male and female) whom I interviewed (along with others

in casual conversation) spoke at length about their negative experiences in school. Most did not graduate, and many were expelled from the school system entirely because of misconduct.

As Willis (1977) and Donaldson (1991) argue, such early experiences of rejection and hostility with institutions of power and authority, along with the lack of recognized job qualifications, accustoms workers to the rigours of low- or unskilled jobs, jobs that usually take no more than two weeks to learn and are always under strong scrutiny by supervisors. Many of the carnival ride and games workers told me that if a worker "makes it" through the first two or three weeks, they will probably stay for the remainder of the carnival season. It was in those first few weeks that people informally learned the carnival "rules" and made the adjustment to the difficult work and living conditions. John, the Lot Superintendent who conducted most of the ride guy hiring, explained that survival of those first two weeks was the main "qualification" for the job:

- Fiona: Background checks are never done on newly-hired people, right? Like I get the sense that it's basically face-value, prove who you are on the job. Is that correct?
- John: Yeah. See, for the first week or two, you're basically on the payroll as a casual. It's two weeks. You can tell if they're gonna make it. Then you put them on the payroll (John 6).

John's perspective of this condition of employment belies the intensity with which the workers were tested in those first two weeks of work. Several of the carnies told me that the bosses treated workers particularly harshly in the first couple of weeks, as if to test the novices' mettle. Jim, a ride guy with a few years' experience with Sullivan Amusements, related the following to me in respect to the criteria for

carnival ride guy survival:

I found out what the deal was [having to prove himself] and I just kept plugging away and my first year was tough 'cause I was new and they didn't know if I was going to stay. Once they know you're going to stay, they relax on you a bit and they treat you as a human. When you first start, they treat you like you're one of their slaves. You're a low-life. You have to prove yourself, earn their respect. We do the same thing with the new guys. After a while you can tell who's gonna stay and who's not. You can look at the person and see how they're working, see how they're not working and you can say, oh, he's gonna stay, or he's gonna be gone in awhile. Yeah, you can point them out. Out here, you know, it's hard work. It's heavy, dirty work. It's long hours. In order for somebody to fit in, for somebody to stay, they gotta be able to look at the job and say this is what we have to do and not complain about it, just do it. Like in my first year, no matter what, I went and did it, eh? Even if it was two or three o'clock in the morning, I went and did it because that's our job and the ones that don't last, they want hours of nine to five. They want to sit back and relax and go and play. I always tell the new guys: you're not here for yourself. You're here for Sullivan Amusements (Jim 3-4).

There was always a tremendous turnover of workers in the carnival. Many workers lasted less than a week, and were fired for real or imagined job infractions; others quit, appalled at the conditions. Survival, then, hinged on acquiring a sufficient degree of acceptance within the carnival culture and, at the same time, developing one's own way of making sense out of an extraordinarily difficult work environment. Most of the sense-making was built around the social aspects of the carnival (see Chapter Ten).

For the male workers, being accepted into the carnival culture involved all of the characteristics of protest masculinity mentioned above: using the body as a tool, physical aggression, drinking, taking drugs (mainly cocaine), boasting and demonstrating the ability to 'take it like a man', as Jim describes above. All of these practices, over time, had the effect of aging the men very rapidly. The work that

they performed, especially on the carnival rides (setting up and tearing down) required an enormous capacity for endurance and strength, which they drew not from conventional sources like healthy food and adequate sleep, but from *within themselves* — the ethic that the more one pushes one's body, the more 'masculine' one becomes. As Donaldson states, the destruction of the body is a way of maintaining social masculinity (Donaldson 1991:18), or, put another way by Stan Gray, to "...fight like a man, not a macho fool who glorifies that which degrades him" (Gray 1987:227).

Violence, Heterosexuality/Homosexuality and Femininity

Three aspects of protest masculinity draw from hegemonic masculinity and emerged as very strong dynamics within the social practices of the carnival workers — violence, the norm of heterosexuality, and the role of femininity in the construction of protest masculinity. The following discussion of these concepts will show their significance in the construction of the protest masculinity facade, and the remaining chapters of this thesis explore them more fully, as they apply to Sullivan Amusements, in particular contexts and social situations.

(A) Violence

In his chapter on protest masculinity, Connell comments that "the outstanding feature of this group's experience of power relations is violence" (Connell 1995:98) with regard to not only their current marginalized economic situation but, more significantly, their life stories that are rife with incidents of violence. Nearly all the carnival workers interviewed referred to numerous areas of violence in the lives that they had 'left behind' upon entering the carnival. Most of the men they had

associated with used violence, domestically, criminally, and punitively. Many had themselves served prison sentences for domestic violence and other physical assaults. In short, they entered the carnival culture as men fully indoctrinated into the belief that physical violence was not only an inevitable part of everyday life but was, in fact, the *appropriate response* to conflictual situations.

As Connell states, "violence can become a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group struggles" (Connell 1995:83). The violence is learned, therefore, in early childhood by observing acts of violence in the home, and extends into later life as the way to simultaneously solve problems and re-assert masculinity, as an individual and as a member of a collective group. Physical violence in the carnival was frequent if not always overt. In fact, I did not become aware of it at all until several weeks into the carnival research. This is not to say that it was a completely hidden or indeed inconsequential component of the carnival social structure. In fact, it was used at all levels of the carnival hierarchy in various forms, but always with the purpose of asserting power and extracting compliance, explored more fully in Chapter Eight.

(B) The Norm of Heterosexuality

Connell (1995), Cheng (1999b), Dunk (1996) and other gender scholars refer to violence being used by men as a way to act against anything 'feminine', arguing that the quintessential antithesis of protest masculinity is homosexuality. The norm of masculinity implies that "the male body has to be disciplined to heterosexuality" (Connell 1995:104; see also Kinsman 1987 and McLaren 1997 on the social construction of heteronormativity), as to present itself as other than heterosexual

denotes the male body as feminine and homosexual. As Connell states:

Oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. Gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity... Hence, from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity (Connell 1995:78).

In his analysis of protest masculinity, Connell points out that the imperative of heterosexuality as the norm has a paradoxical dynamic in terms of homosexual acts and homophobia (Connell 1995:103). He refers to practitioners of protest masculinity (bodybuilders) who surreptitiously engaged in homosexual sex to earn money (Connell 1995:38/39), and another man who, "despite a number of relationships with men, ...never settled into a gay social identity" (Connell 1995:103). In a culture where homosexuality literally flies in the face of what it means 'to be a man', homophobic beliefs may be espoused rhetorically by such men, but "...those who hustle find marvellous ways of reinterpreting what they are up to, and denying their own homosexual engagement" (Connell 1995:39). Sexual orientation in Sullivan Amusements was hegemonically heterosexual, meaning that heterosexuality was the "ideal", or the norm, embraced in such a masculinist culture. However, I learned of several cases of homosexuality, practiced by both men and women, although under entirely different circumstances and in varying degrees of open-ness.

One of the initial puzzles that took several weeks to unravel was that I never heard any homophobic comments from either male or female carnival workers (which is not to claim categorically that none existed), and yet the entire carnival

culture, on the surface, was rigidly heterosexual at first glance. I was mystified because, in all other male working-class environments that I had experienced, overt homophobic statements were a common practice by men in their attempts to constantly establish and re-establish their masculinity. However, as I spent more time in the culture, I learned of several instances of homosexual behaviour in Sullivan Amusements, on the part of both males and females¹⁰³. Two young female workers were reputed to be bisexual, although only one openly declared her attraction to both men and women. She routinely 'propositioned' me, laughing uproariously when I turned her down, as if she enjoyed trying to embarrass me, although it was clear to me that there was no malicious intent behind her flirtations with me. I was certainly not personally offended by her attempts, and in fact interpreted them as an inclusionary act, given that she regularly approached many of the other female workers with joking offers of oral sex.

It was among the male carnival workers that I located the most hidden forms of homosexuality and bisexuality. Nearly all the male workers displayed exaggerated forms of heterosexuality -- posing 'seductively' in front of their rides for the female passers-by, flirting constantly with me, and boasting of their heterosexual exploits to me and anybody else within earshot.

¹⁰³My discovery of the male homosexual activity began with a key informant telling me that she had something to tell me, but that I must not tell anyone else in the carnival. I kept my word and did not pass on the information (just as I never passed on anything that was told to me by any carnival worker). A few weeks before the end of the season, several workers began hinting strongly that "there were things about the carnival" that I probably didn't know. Not wanting to betray my key informant, yet suspecting the nature of the 'things' I didn't know, I responded by saying casually, "If you're talking about homosexuality, I already know about it". Looking relieved, the workers would then corroborate what I had already been told, thereby adding more validity to the initial information.

When I was first told about incidents of homosexuality by a ride guy, during an interview, I did not even realize what he was telling me. He had explained that the reason why he had moved from one cabana to another was because of the "AC/DC crap". I assumed that he was referring to the heavy metal musical tastes of the ride guy crew who lived in the cabana. (The ride guy I was interviewing was from a small farming town in the prairies and preferred country music. I had interpreted his comment quite literally: that he could not endure the playing of heavy metal music in the cabana.) Several weeks later, one of my key informants (a ticket seller with whom I had established a strong friendship) asked me if I was aware of the bisexuality of this particular ride crew (who shared the same cabana). Suddenly, the "AC/DC" comment took on a whole different meaning, as she told me about the sexual acts that took place among the members of the crew. What I found most interesting at the time was that this crew was *the* most vocal and overt of all the workers about their "conquests" of heterosexual women.

The other critical fact was that nearly all the crew were First Nations or Metis men. I was not able to learn more about the extent of the homosexual behaviour in the carnival as I felt that it might not be safe for me to inquire into the issue further, given the hidden nature of the activities. However, a White heterosexual male carnival worker told me that he had been approached by another White, ostensibly heterosexual, ride guy for sex, which leads me to surmise that there may have been more homosexuality/bisexuality than I was indeed aware of. What did become clear to me was that the homosexual behaviour of these men was never conducted openly in the sense that it became common knowledge, nor did they ever speak to

me about it (with the exception of the above man who told me in confidence, and expressed his disgust at the other man's requests for homosexual relations).

The other instance of homosexuality (or bisexuality) concerned a senior male carnival administrator who, according to several carnies, routinely engaged in homosexual acts with young male carnival ride guys and joint bums, paying them for their sexual acts. One of the boys that this man regularly engaged in sex with was, in fact, just a boy about nine years old, the son of one of the independents. Several carnival workers told me that the boy's stepfather encouraged these transactions as it was perceived by the stepfather to be just another way of earning an income.

What is most revealing about these incidents of homosexuality/bisexuality is the clear boundaries that were drawn based on gender, power and age. There was a contradiction involved in men's practice of it: as long as they were not discussed openly, homosexual acts, *among equals*, were clearly considered acceptable in an ostensibly heterosexual cultural environment. Nonetheless, homosexual acts conducted by a man in power with males of much lesser power, and for money, were strongly censured in the culture¹⁰⁴.

The above examples of incidents of homosexuality in the carnival, where heterosexuality was the norm for men, and bisexuality/homosexuality only acceptable for women, show the contrast between the socially constructed

¹⁰⁴As further evidence of the gendered nature of sexual acts, I learned of several female carnival workers with severe cocaine habits who engaged regularly in sex in exchange for cocaine from one of the two main carnival cocaine suppliers (who were also carnival employees). While these acts of prostitution were considered by most to be demeaning, the degree of moral outrage was minuscule in comparison with the disgust against the man who bought sex from the nine-year old boy.

dichotomization of sexual preference, and the lived reality of a very fluid sexuality.

As Connell states in his chapter entitled "*A Very Straight Gay*",

...public discourse takes heterosexuality for granted. But compulsory heterosexuality was [sic] not necessarily realized in practice (Connell 1995:148).

He further argues that there is substantial evidence in many countries that more males have engaged in homosexuality activity in their younger years than males who became primarily homosexual, and that "young people's sexuality is a field of possibilities, not a deterministic system" (Connell 1995:148-9).

Maynard's explanation for homosexual acts that he located in logging camps and other same-sex environments is that "the material conditions can loosen the hegemony of a rigid heterosexual masculinity" (Maynard 1989:167/8). The carnival was not a same-sex environment. In fact, women were readily available to the male carnival workers in the form of the ever-present so-called "lot lice". However, most of the ride guy crews lived in same-sex quarters, cramped and totally devoid of privacy. I was not able to explore more fully the homosexual activity, but the very existence of it, masked by a code of silence by the practitioners, as well as in general carnival discourse, was further evidence of the centrality of presumed, and expected, heterosexuality in the carnival.

Given the salience of physicality and heterosexuality in the tenets of protest masculinity, it becomes clear why homosexuality and bisexuality were, for the most part, unknown and invisible dynamics in Sullivan Amusements. As Kinsman (1987) states, "heterosexual hegemony, and sexual regulation more generally, are an integral aspect of the organization of class, State, and gender relations" (Kinsman

1987:34). In marginalized working class environments like Sullivan Amusements, heteronormativity prescribes what is considered to be appropriate sexual behaviour. Male homosexual activity, therefore, was implicitly deemed to be deviant and unsafe to exhibit publicly. For those men with the least amount of power in the carnival, then, a strict adherence to the expected behaviour of protest masculinity involved public displays of emphasized heterosexuality.

(C) Femininity

The third aspect of protest masculinity encompasses a further dimension of the norm of heterosexuality, namely, the role of femininity in the maintenance of hegemonic masculine boundaries and practices. To contextualize the femininities found in Sullivan Amusements, I need to return to the issue of hegemonic masculinity and how this concept applied to the males in Sullivan Amusements.

Connell argues that "hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women" (Connell 1987:183). In Sullivan Amusements there existed two inter-related sets of hegemonic masculinity. The first set, practiced by most of the male members of the royalty, was constructed around the "showman" image¹⁰⁵. In the North American

¹⁰⁵Ron and Paul Sullivan, the male heads of Sullivan Amusements, called themselves "showmen", a term that is used for all owners of carnivals. Within the carnival culture in North American, showmen enjoy high status. They meet during the winter season for conventions, travel on exotic holidays together, and socialize together informally. They are held in high regard in carnival "circles": in short, they occupy a class within the carnival culture that is prestigious and envied. But it is a social class that is quite distinct from other prestigious occupations in mainstream culture, given the generally low levels of formal education and lack of actual paper qualifications.

There is an expected mode of attire for showmen and their female partners (who enjoy equal levels of status within the generalized carnival business world). Showmen dress like J.R. Ewing from the 1980's television series, *Dallas*: polyester suits, cowboy

male-dominated carnival culture, there is an emulation of an idealized masculinity constructed largely on an image of ostentation and physical evidence of wealth. Analyzed in the larger context of hegemonic masculinity, this form of hegemonic masculinity could be characterized as a kind of hybridized¹⁰⁶ hegemonic masculinity, wherein elements of middle-class masculinity are fused with a more 'sophisticated', or idealized, form of protest masculinity. This form of hybridized hegemonic masculinity then provided the model, or ideal, against which all other masculinities in Sullivan Amusements were measured, and underpinned both the classed and gendered elements in the carnival.

The femininities in the carnival culture were equally as diverse, and yet all were constructed in relation to the various strata of masculinities found in Sullivan Amusements. Smith (1988) states that "femininities are active and creative parts of social organization" (Smith 1988:47). The maintenance of masculinity, particularly protest masculinity, within social practice, relies on a form of femininity that ensures the continued domination of women by men.

There is no direct female equivalent of hegemonic masculinity (Connell

boots, cowboy hats, and lots of gold jewellery. Their female partners also wear Western-style clothing, leather with lots of fringes, and tailored shirts and pants, all accentuated by ostentatious gold jewellery, the bigger the better.

¹⁰⁶I need to credit Eduardo P. Archetti with this term, found in his (1999) *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina*. Archetti refers to the multiplicities of hegemonic masculinities, and uses the model of hybridization to characterize a type of hegemonic masculinity that draws on traditional practices and adapts them in response to socio-historical change (Archetti 1999:93). I argue that the type of hegemonic masculinity practiced by the male carnival royalty also builds from tradition (the historical dimension of North American carnivals) as well as change (integration with mainstream hegemonic practice).

1987:183). However, there is a specific form of femininity, emphasized femininity,

...that is in compliance with the prevailing pattern of femininity; which accommodates hegemonically masculine male interests and desires while preventing other femininities from gaining cultural articulation (Cheng 1999b:420; see also Connell 1987).

It is a form of femininity that is constructed around "the global subordination of women to men that provides an essential basis for differentiation" (Connell 1987:183). Emphasized femininity stresses interpersonal rather than technical skills, vulnerability and submission in romantic encounters, tacit agreement to praise the image of hegemonic masculinity within individual males, acceptance of women's subordinate role in work, and sexual availability (Connell 1987:187). In short, gender becomes clearly bifurcated between what is deemed to be an ideal male (hegemonic masculinity) and the congruent female image (emphasized femininity), the latter reinforcing the former by attempting to 'live out' the expectations of the hegemonic male's ideal female.

While Connell's (1987) presentation of emphasized femininity implies that its practitioners rarely experience conflict in their role as the subservient 'other' to men, Skeggs (1996) argues that working-class women, those who are likely to 'do' emphasized femininity more overtly, do not "occupy [this role]... with comfort" (Skeggs 1997:4). The rigours of being working-class, Skeggs posits, create barriers to the acquisition of a soft, vulnerable, submissive femininity, and the image of ideal femininity is, in fact, a working-class interpretation of middle-class femininity (Skeggs 1997:6 & 99). Being working-class, then, means a constant striving towards an idealized middle-class image, usually attempted through the medium of

the body. The image that is sought is one of respectability as, to the working-class,

White middle-class femininity was defined as the ideal but also as the most passive and dependent of femininities. It was always coded as respectable (Skeggs 1997:99).

The most significant markers of femininity for working-class women are appearance (clothing, make-up, hair) and behaviour (Skeggs 1997:100). The body, then, becomes the medium by which the transmission of idealized femininity is conveyed to men and other women. Emphasized femininity is a social construction that takes this emulation of middle-class respectability and sexuality, and adapts it according to social class and social location. The desired goal, however, of the practitioners of emphasized femininity is to find romantic love, marriage and children. In fact, women who do not have a male partner are deemed within the working-class culture, by both self and others, to be socially unsuccessful and sexually unattractive (Skeggs 1997:114).

Just as heterosexuality is the norm in hegemonic masculinity, it is clear that heterosexuality also dominates the construction of emphasized femininity. As Skeggs states "heterosexuality consolidates respectability" (Skeggs 1997:135). The image of femininity as the appropriate masculine complement renders other sexualities (e.g. lesbianism or bisexuality) as counter-productive to the idealized feminine project of acquiring an appropriate male to demonstrate success.

For women, then, who practice emphasized femininity, the contradictory elements inherent in the desire for social acceptance through respectability coupled with the physical display of sexual availability and attractiveness create a constant tension. In the working-class, those women who practice emphasized femininity try

to maintain a balance between the emulation of middle-class respectability and displaying sufficient physical markers of sexual availability and attractiveness to men.

As Connell (1987) points out, not all women practice emphasized femininity, but all femininities are constructed around hegemonic masculinity, in “strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance, and others by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation” (Connell 1987:183). In Sullivan Amusements, a wide variety of femininities were practiced, and all were constructed in direct relationship to the various renditions of hegemonic and protest masculinities found in the carnival. In Chapter Ten, I explore the multiplicity of femininities and the various strategies used by women to negotiate the essentially masculinist terrain in the carnival.

Gender and Social Class

Returning to my arguments at the beginning of the chapter, gender is created in particular social relations and under certain class and race conditions which make the formation of protest masculinity more readily understood. As Connell states:

The project of protest masculinity also develops in a marginal class situation, where the claim to power that is central in hegemonic masculinity is constantly negated by economic and cultural weakness (Connell 1995:116).

The carnival was an example of a ‘marginal class situation’ that offered ample evidence of the “spectacular display, embracing the marginality and stigma and turning them to account” (Connell 1995:116). Seen and understood from this perspective, many of the contradictions that I located in the carnival — the preening

of their bodies, the boasting of their sexual prowess and the enormous pride in their work, work which was demeaning and demanding beyond all conventional understanding and which was done *by choice* — begin to make sense.

I have shown that protest masculinity is 'performed' by males who occupy marginal social class locations. It is important to examine class in any study of masculinity because masculinities are formed not only through their gendered relations, but equally through their particular class locations. Recently, there has been a regrettable retreat by academics from class (Skeggs 1997:6). Conceptual retreats often result in empirical retreats. If we ignore class, we then ignore a socially stratified (and unequal) society. Class-blind research and theorizing can render some groups invisible for, as Skeggs suggests, "...we need to ask whose experiences are being silenced, whose lives are being ignored and whose lives are considered worthy of study" (Skeggs 1997:7). When some groups are made invisible by a perspective that ignores class and/or gender, class consciousness is often perceived myopically as a one-dimensional concept that assumes "mutual conditions of objective class locations" (Livingstone and Mangan 1996:9), thereby ruling out the possibility of more complex social relations.

Connell (1995) echoes Skeggs' pleas for the re-insertion of class in gender studies: "...it is impossible to understand the shaping of working-class masculinities without giving full weight to their class as well as their gender politics" (Connell 1995:75) or, stated in another way, "to understand gender, then, we must constantly go beyond gender" (Connell 1995:76). What he means, of course, is that gender does not exist in isolation of other social conditions: gender only *becomes* gender in

juxtaposition with other social elements, especially race, class and sexual orientation. As Donaldson states "class is gendered and gender is classed" (Donaldson 1991:8). In the case of working-class masculinities, gender is formed in reaction to conditions of class subordination and oppression from other, more powerful, class strategies and controls. When we place gender within a context of class, we immediately are able to capture the multiplicities of not only class but, more significantly, working-class masculinities, as gender is constructed through the relations of dominance and oppression found in class.

Exploring the salience of class further, I return to Willis' (1977) articulation of the social and economic conditions that give rise to, or prepare, some men for marginalized work, the kind of work that produces protest masculinity. Willis uses the term "differentiation" to refer to:

The particular process by which working class culture creatively manifests itself as a concrete form within, and separates itself from even as it is influenced by, the particular institution... (Willis 1977:62).

It is within the school system that, according to Willis, many working-class boys first learn to negotiate and reinterpret formal institutional practices within their own culture. This is accompanied by the establishment of a "'them' and 'us'" (Willis 1977:109) framework which is an acknowledgment by the working class of their subordinated position in a hierarchical power system. It is oppositional to the dominant culture and, at the same time, permits the construction of a paradigm that is carried from the education setting into the larger world. It becomes the tool for them to understand and cope with the larger elements of a class culture.

This point is reinforced in Skeggs' (1997) argument that one's self-perception, or subjectivity, is significantly constructed around ideas of class — one's own class and one's class in relation to others — and, further, that class is situated historically, which takes into account the social and economic relations of power and access to that power (Skeggs 1997:7; see also Lawler 1999).

In explaining how the working class 'lads' reconcile their own class situation with what they perceive as the enemy — the dominant institutionalized culture — Willis is careful to distinguish between integration and differentiation. Integration is a process whereby working-class members accept as legitimate the hegemony of the dominant class (Willis 1977:63). Differentiation insists instead on the continued existence of working-class oppositions that get played out within the formal institutionalized setting and which provide meaning for the participants. From the perspective of the "institutional agents" (Willis 1977:63), this behaviour is considered to be rebellious and evidence of a lack of integration. But from the standpoint of the 'rebels' themselves, it is a complex and highly functional way of acknowledging the existence of the more powerful institution and, at the same time, weaving their opposition through it, infusing it with meanings that, ironically, permit the continued control by the institution at the same time as allowing the working-class members to maintain some form of control over their culture.

This point is strengthened as Willis outlines the oppositional nature of class cultures. Class cultures do not develop unproblematically out of a clear-cut struggle between subordinated groups and those in power. Instead, class cultures develop in a "circle of unintended consequences" (Willis 1977:59) whereby the oppressed

extract certain aspects of the dominant culture and re-work them to their advantage (and, sometimes, unwittingly, to their disadvantage) in an attempt to find some degree of understanding of their milieu.

Central to the oppositional techniques and practices of protest masculinity is the practitioners' full knowledge of the disdain of the middle class (and 'upper' working class) towards working-class culture.¹⁰⁷ In a useful historical examination of the formation of the working classes, Skeggs (1997) argues that the naming of the working class as such developed out of the anxiety of the middle class to distinguish themselves in the social order (Skeggs 1997:4). There is, therefore, a moral dimension to the categorization, a need to separate the working class as a group of degenerate human beings who are "dangerous, polluting, threatening, revolutionary, pathological' and without respect" (Skeggs 1997:1). Stan Gray (1987)

¹⁰⁷I had several personal experiences of the stigma attached to carnival workers. While wearing my 'show coat' which had a Sullivan Amusements insignia on it, I was refused motel rooms on three occasions, with the motel managers stating that carnival workers do nothing but cause trouble and bring all their friends into the rooms to have showers. This was despite my adding that I was a sociologist travelling with the show. Another form of discrimination that I received was at a hospital in a large, central B.C. town. I had developed an excruciating pain in my left foot, and went to the hospital's Emergency Ward. As I was waiting in a curtained-off area, I overheard the doctor, who saw me next, speaking in kind, gentle and respectful tones to the adjacent patient. He then came in to see me, and I explained my ailment, adding that I had been doing an extensive amount of driving prior to the pain developing. As soon as I mentioned the carnival, his manner abruptly changed from compassion to coldness. I had added that I was a sociologist conducting research but all he seemed to hear was "carnival". He coldly asked me if I took drugs. I said "No" and he said "Are you sure?", and then asked me if I was an alcoholic. I said to him "I am not a drug user or an alcoholic. What do either have to do with a sore foot?" He glared at me and offered me a prescription for painkillers which I turned down after asking whether there was a side effect of drowsiness, explaining I needed to be fully compos mentis for driving. I did accept a prescription for anti-inflammatory medication. Upon returning to the lot, I told Cynthia about my experience and she said that was typical of treatment received by carnival workers from the medical community.

similarly points out that the working class is treated as contemptible: "...scorned by polite society" (Gray 1987:225; see also Willis 1977:148 and Donaldson 1991:91). The relativism inherent in traditional middle-class interpretations of the working class has resulted in very few studies that focus on the standpoint of the working class and how disempowered people in impoverished social and work structures do make sense of class, both their own and others. It is important, then, to add to existing studies on working-class domains that take into account the occupants' subjective understandings of their situations, and re-position class as a central organizing feature of such understandings.

Race, Ethnicity and Racialization

A complete understanding of working-class masculinities (and femininities) must also include the racialized as well as classed dimensions. As Connell (1995) states, "...gender 'intersects' — better, interacts — with race and class" (Connell 1995:75). The inclusion of "race, class and gender" in studies of oppressed groups is a relatively recent development in many academic disciplines, and it has been frequently criticized for ignoring the various degrees to which each is instrumental in the actual relations of domination in a particular social and historical situation (Satzewich 1998:41). Consequently, it is important in any discussion of the three concepts of race, class and gender to distinguish between (a) the concepts as analytical tools and (b) how they help to explain the specific social phenomena that are the focus of the academic study, the latter thereby bringing to light the fundamental basis of oppression (race, class or gender, or combinations thereof). I begin, therefore, by describing the concepts of race, ethnicity and racialization, and

then examine the racialized aspects in Sullivan Amusements.

It is important to point out that in a White-dominated social environment like Sullivan Amusements, it is often the case that the racialized dimensions of gender and class constructions are completely ignored or, minimally, quickly dismissed. This is especially more likely to occur when research is conducted by a White person on a Caucasian populace. As Dyer states:

The invisibility of whiteness as a racial position in white (which is to say dominant) discourse is of a piece with its ubiquity.... We may be on our way to genuine hybridity, multiplicity without (white) hegemony, and it may be where we want to get to -- but we aren't there yet, and we won't get there until we see whiteness, see its power, its particularity and limitedness, put it in its place and end its rule. This is why studying whiteness matters... White people need to learn to see themselves as white, to see their particularity. In other words, whiteness needs to be made strange (Dyer 2000:541).

While recognizing the variety of "Whitenesses" (e.g. Polish White, Canadian White, Catholic-American White), Dyer argues that there is still an essential Whiteness that amounts to a kind of racial hegemony, reflected in almost universal domination by Whites of political, economic and social structures and subordination of non-White peoples (Dyer 2000:541-543). In fact, in his description of White identity, Dyer outlines characteristics that run compellingly parallel to those of hegemonic masculinity:

1. Transcendence of the body.
2. Subjectively experienced as both an individual and a member of a large collectivity.
3. Commitment to heterosexuality.
4. Instability and claims to universality (Dyer 2000:545).

The last point, instability, creates a constant tension, or paradox as Dyer describes it. In its endless fight to claim and maintain its privileged position in world culture,

Whiteness simultaneously “entices those outside to seek to cross its borders and those inside to aspire ever upwards within it” (Dyer 2000:545). Just as hegemonic masculinity is an ideal rarely attained by those who emulate it, Whiteness in its purely hegemonic form is an equally ephemeral yet highly powerful ideal of cultural power.

The need to make visible the significance of Whiteness provides the basis for the argument that the process of racialization works not only to create conditions of social, political and cultural marginality for those not deemed by self or others to be White, but to provide the basis, or rationale, for the continued dominance by White people in positions of power and authority.

It is critical to clarify what is meant by the term ‘racialization’, a term which has changed over time, beginning with Fanon who coined the word to refer to the cultural difficulties faced by formerly colonized people in Africa (Fanon 1967:170-1 in Miles 1989:74), through to Miles’ definition of:

...the social relations between people [which] have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities (Miles 1989:75).

Racialization, as used in this thesis, follows Miles’ definition above, whereby significance is attached to people based on phenotypical characteristics, mainly skin colour. The process of racialization, therefore, involves the attachment of characteristics to people based on their perceived race.

It is also important to define what is meant by the terms ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’. ‘Race’, like ‘racialization’, has been used somewhat loosely over the past few centuries to define what are perceived to be groups of people who share particular

biological or physical characteristics and personalities, the categorization of which have been seen as “objective biological and/or social fact[s]” (James 1999:41). Early scholars adhered to the notion of people's racial categories as fixed but, more recently, the notion that one's race and the categories and characteristics attached thereto are historically- and contextually-defined has become more prominent. In this thesis, I refer to ‘race’ as a social construction that has roots in underlying historical practices of a hierarchy based on biological differences but that in contemporary Western society provides the foundation upon which groups are created, particular social roles are assigned, and social status is given.

Closely related to the concept of “race” is “ethnicity”, which moves beyond the perceived physiological distinctions between groups of people to the shared cultural activities and identity of such groups. The two terms are often used interchangeably in social science literature which tends to focus on the social rather than physical attributes attached to allegedly racially-distinct groups. In this thesis, I tend to use the term “race” rather than “ethnicity”, although both terms, in contemporary discourse, focus on the socially-constructed attributes and societal conditions that rest on the racialization of groups of people.

Racially, carnivals in North America have always been dominated by White owners and workers, although some non-White workers have found employment in these locations. However, the work available to them has always been in the most menial of carnival jobs. According to Marcus, the veteran Lot Superintendent of the large American carnival I observed in North Dakota, United States carnivals only rarely hire African-American males (rarely females), and then only as “roughies”,

low-level, physically demanding general labour jobs with little contact with the general public. During my observations of the two large American carnivals, I observed no African-American workers (with the exception of the above-mentioned Lot Superintendent), and no Hispanic- or Asian-American workers.

Sullivan Amusements hired predominantly White workers, although there were many Aboriginal and Metis male ride guys and one Aboriginal female ticket seller. It is also salient to point out that, in nearly all cases of hiring, the workers approached the carnival, as opposed to the carnival proactively searching for job candidates. Notwithstanding the carnival owners' minimal involvement in actively seeking workers, the significance of White dominance and privilege in Sullivan Amusements reflects the historical practice of White men (and their White female partners) dominating the upper ranks, thereby ensuring the hegemony of the White elite. One could argue that the ports of entry in the carnival were systemically safeguarded against races other than White, Metis or Aboriginal gaining employment, as most carnival workers entered the carnival by one of three routes. The first was by direct connection with a prominent carnival employee, in the form of prior relationships (i.e. a friend, relative or romantic/sexual partner). As previously mentioned, all the Sullivan Amusements royalty were White as were their friends and relatives. The second way that employees gained entry was via homeless shelters, such as the Salvation Army. This happened very rarely and, to my knowledge, only joint bums were hired by this method. The joint line owners would go and 'recruit' workers from these sources and, to my knowledge, only White males were ever hired by this method. The third avenue for employment was for people to

simply wander onto the lot, and ask if there were any jobs available. If the applicant was a male, he might find work on a Kiddy Ride or in the joints. During my time with Sullivan Amusements, very few females found work at the carnival in this manner, as almost all female employees entered the carnival by way of a sexual relationship with an incumbent carnival male.¹⁰⁸ Other than the Aboriginal ticket seller, most of the females hired were White, and a very few were Metis, although their skin colour identified them as White only.

As previously mentioned, Aboriginal and Metis male workers (mainly ride guys) were perceived as being dedicated and hard-working individuals who, once hired, were likely to remain with the carnival for at least the entire season and probably appear for subsequent seasons. In fact, most of the veteran ride guys were Metis or Aboriginal. This categorization of racial groups into 'suitability' or 'unsuitability' reflects the arguments of Miles (1989) who states that:

...those people present in the labour market are ranked by employers. Where that hierarchy is constructed in such a way that the qualities of individuals are perceived to be representative of a wider collectivity, and if the individual is deemed to possess the criteria that designate membership of such collectivity, the question of suitability may be determined by reference to the perceived qualities of the collectivity rather than to the perceived qualities of the individual applicant (Miles 1989:125/6).

The paradox, in Sullivan Amusements, was that, despite widespread mainstream

¹⁰⁸The only exception to this was when the carnival advertised in a local paper in a town where the carnival was playing a very large exhibition. They needed to hire extra employees in all carnival jobs (ticket sellers, ride guys, and food and game joint workers), just for that spot. Three women were hired to sell tickets, and two were hired to work on the smallest Kiddy Ride.

(White) beliefs of Aboriginal people as lazy and lacking in ambition (Ponting 1998:276), Aboriginal and Metis men were seen as highly desirable employees due to their dedication, deference to authority, and willingness to work hard (see Chapter Five). As Miles states above, stereotypes of Aboriginal and Metis workers held by those who made hiring decisions in the carnival shaped their perception of workers who were more likely to remain with the carnival for the entire season, a clear case of racialization that worked in favour of Aboriginal men seeking work in the carnival.

In Sullivan Amusements, I found no evidence of overt racism by the White workers or royalty against the Aboriginal or Metis employees: all workers were treated equally, receiving the same wages and toiling under the same difficult conditions. The actual jobs held by workers did have a racialized dimension as already stated: Aboriginal and Metis males tended to work only as ride guys. But this was not a consequence of any deliberate segregation by the bosses. The Aboriginal workers sought work only on the rides, and I knew of only one Metis male who worked in the game joints by choice.

Another significant factor was that many of the Metis workers, most of whom were Cree Metis, did not appear to be Aboriginal, but White, in terms of skin colour. I did not learn whether or not John, the Lot Superintendent who conducted most of the ride guy hirings, was initially aware of their Aboriginal status when he made such decisions, but given the pattern of applicants knowing incumbent employees, it is very likely the case that potential workers referred to their friendships with Aboriginal or Metis ride guys.

My interpretation of the situation that Aboriginal males were

disproportionately represented among the ride guy workers was that conditions *outside* the carnival (poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse, criminal activities) erected barriers to their gaining employment in other areas, reflecting widespread systemic practices and beliefs about Aboriginals in Canada. As stated above, nearly all of the men knew somebody already employed in Sullivan Amusements, and used this attachment to gain entry into the carnival, one of the few employers who would hire them, given that there was no interest by the owners in a potential employee's employment history or criminal record. Once *inside* the carnival culture, these workers found a relatively egalitarian work and social milieu: all of the Aboriginal or Metis workers whom I interviewed and/or spoke to informally referred emphatically to the egalitarian carnival social and work system that offered them a location devoid of discrimination.

In summary, the history of White dominance in carnivals created the conditions of positions of power and privilege being held by White males and females. Only White, Aboriginal and Metis people sought work in Sullivan Amusements, and the latter two groups, experiencing the highest degree of discrimination in mainstream Canadian society, were able to find work in the carnival, usually by dint of an association with an incumbent Aboriginal or Metis worker. Once inside the carnival culture itself, however, the racialization process ceased to exist in an overt fashion, as the conditions of oppression were applied equally to all workers, regardless of race.

Gender, Race, Social Class and Protest Masculinity in Sullivan Amusements

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that some of the difficulties I found when

researching the literature centered around the separation between the work and social places of working-class groups that were the focus of other research on gender. Another significant area of difference is located in the positioning of the oppositional groups that construct the differential power relationships involved in social structures occupied by working-class people. All of the literature makes the case that working-class antagonism and resentments are directed at the work-place supervisors/owners. But, as I pointed out, I located very little evidence of *sustained* worker hostility against the owners/bosses in Sullivan Amusements. The antipathy was directed at customers, particularly relatively well-to-do middle-class people, who were seen as foolish and easily taken in, especially by the joint bums.

Both of these points (fusion of work- and social-space; class-based antagonism against customers rather than bosses) are crucial to understanding why much of the existing literature does not match my findings in this research. Most of the studies conducted on working-class masculinities, in the work place, examine work domains where the workers rarely, if ever, interact with the people who actually buy the products that are manufactured by the workers. The majority of male-dominated working-class occupations are practiced in conditions isolated from the consumers themselves. In the carnival, however, the carnival workers interacted with the general public on a constant basis. The carnival did not produce a tangible product that is sold, in a material sense (other than food and novelties). However, the carnival sold what is assumed to be entertainment, and the social relations between workers and their customers that inform how the transactions took place were highly indicative of the self-perception of the carnival workers, especially their

social class.

The overall attitude of contempt towards customers, displayed by all carnival owners and workers, is critical to understanding the social relations within the carnival itself. In many senses, this collectivized disdain created an overall status consciousness among all carnival workers and owners, despite the class distinctions within the carnival hierarchy itself. I use the term "status" in the Weberian sense of "an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges" (Weber in Giddens and Held 1982:72). In many respects, the sense of a shared status emanated from the general public's opinion of all carnival workers and owners as dirty, degenerate and immoral. Although none of the carnival royalty demonstrated (to me) any overt recognition of this, their behaviour signified acknowledgment of differentiation from mainstream culture. The carnival workers, however, were quite vocal in their subjective sense of difference from non-carnival people, due no doubt to their being in constant, almost daily, contact with 'locals', whose disdain and fear of the carnies was usually undisguised.¹⁰⁹

Of critical importance in understanding the shared status consciousness, manifested in the shared sentiment of "us" versus "them", was the route by which most of the carnival owners and independents entered the carnival domain. Most of the senior administrative personnel were literally born and raised in the carnival culture. I found much evidence of long-standing familial connections, where owners' parents and even grandparents were carnies. Another source of commonality

¹⁰⁹The exceptions, of course, were the 'lot lice', females who were attracted by the perceived mystique surrounding the itinerant male workers.

between the carnival social strata was working knowledge. Most of the veteran carnival owners literally worked their way up to the occupations they held during the period of the research, in spite of their already-established familial connections. Paul Sullivan, for example, did not just oversee the carnival. Having literally grown up in Sullivan Amusements, he knew how to set up and tear down every ride in the carnival, and how to run all of the carnival games.

Underscoring the overall carnival status consciousness and collectivity, however, was a highly entrenched class system that provided the carnival royalty with tremendous amounts of power and prestige, much of which was maintained and perpetuated by coercive and violent techniques of control. By hiring a workforce that accepted these conditions as normal and natural, the authority of the royalty was only very rarely challenged. On the rare occasions that a worker did resist the power of the royalty, the worker was immediately fired and often beaten (see Chapter Eight). A critical component of the dominance of the royalty over workers was the royalty's subjective understandings of their workers as almost sub-human, with the exception of a very few, valued long-time workers.

To place the owners under the general category of "management" and, therefore, automatically in opposition to the workers, then, would be entirely inaccurate in the case of Sullivan Amusements. The carnival workers showed tremendous respect for their bosses, albeit respect incited by fear of retribution. But in cultures characterized by the elements of protest masculinity, ultimate authority in any relationship rests on respect. In sum, the carnival culture, despite its collective status consciousness, was a highly segmented social domain, with the carnival

royalty occupying the highest level in terms of wealth, power and prestige, the middle-management and independent owners as petit bourgeoisie, and the carnival workers forming what amounted to an underclass.

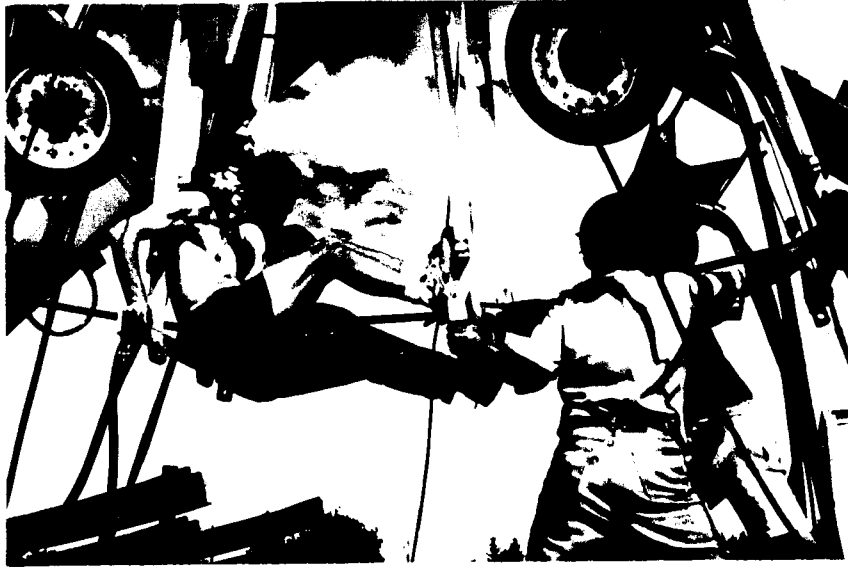
Conclusion

I began this chapter with a personal account of my own gradual emergence into the highly gendered (and sexualized) culture of Sullivan Amusements. Through my discussions of masculinities and femininities, the central characteristics of working-class renditions that focus on the body as the expression of sexuality and value, and the inclusion of social class and race in the construction of gender, I have shown the complexity of these elements in the construction of social relations and their relevance to Sullivan Amusements.

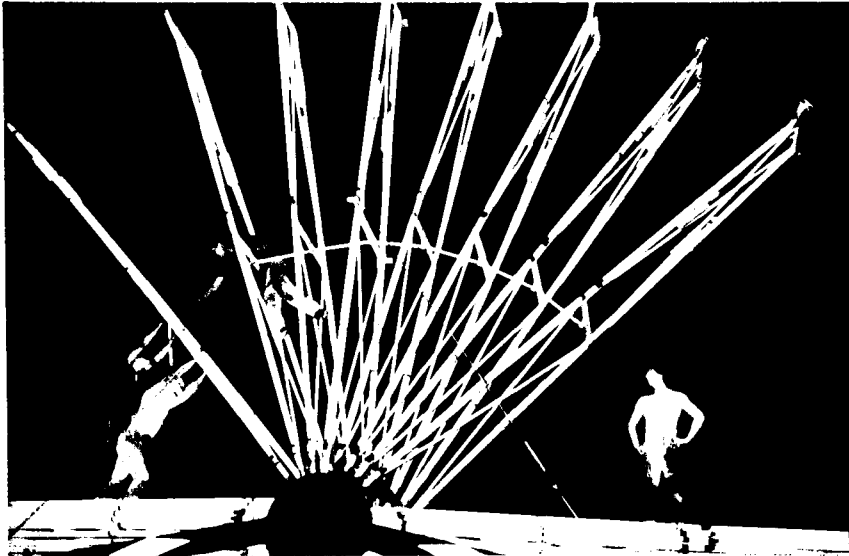
In the remainder of this thesis, particular characteristics of protest masculinity will be expanded upon in the case of the workers at Sullivan Amusements, and it will be shown that the (mostly male) workers in the carnival provided examples of a “differentiated” masculinity that add to the analyses of both Connell (1995), Willis (1977) and other who have examined masculinities.

It is in the examination of these elements of protest masculinity that the central question of this thesis — how and why do people engage in difficult work under equally difficult conditions? — will be answered by placing the workers themselves and their understandings and interpretations of their work and their co-workers within the context of their working and social lives. This thesis should then add to the research on gender, race, class, sexual orientation and power that takes into account the subjective interpretations of men and women within a social

structure that, variously, shapes, reinforces, and limits, but also provides a place of expression for, the inhabitants' social action.



Both photos: Setting up the Skydiver, the carnival's largest ride. All ride crew members were Aboriginal or Metis.



Chapter 7

Buckets, Bennies and Belly Cloths: Ride Guy Pride and Protest Masculinity

These jobs here, you get into a bite, you can lose a finger... I got hit by the wind brace once, knocked me into a coma for three days. I was towering up [the ride] and I wasn't paying attention and when I did look over, the wind brace came down and it hit me on the arm, and then the arm on the recoil it hit my head. It drug me and I tripped over the blocking. I fell in between the outriggers. It was a good thing I tripped over that blocking or else it would have drug me right into the outriggers and crushed me. It just took me right along. If I got my head caught between the outrigger and windbrace, it would have killed me right there. But I stumbled and fell right underneath it and I woke up in hospital. Yeah, it gave me a bite but I went back again. This time I knew to look out for the wind brace. A bite. That's what they call them when you get hurt, a cut or a broken finger. Like a wild animal bites you and this one can really bite you too (Jack 15).

Introduction:

This chapter explores one occupation in the carnival, ride operator (known as ride guy), and the role of protest masculinity in the existence and perpetuation of a job that, frequently, defied common-sense understandings of safety and endurance. I will show that the social construction of masculinity combined with the heavy physical demands of carnival ride guy work to produce a work environment characterized by working hours and conditions that, in turn, compelled the ride guys to work at a superhuman level to meet the demands imposed by the owners and, at the same time, meet the criteria of masculinity that informed their work and the skills needed to accomplish it, at high risk to their physical and emotional safety.

To investigate the degree that masculinity informed the everyday (Smith 1987) (and everynight) practices of a carnival ride operator, I examined the words used by ride guys to describe their work, including how and why they tolerated the conditions under which the work took place, as well as my own observations of their

work.

Before describing the type and conditions of ride guy work, it is important to place it within the larger carnival context. As stated earlier, Sullivan Amusements had an annual work season of eight months, from late February through to October. All carnival employees worked an average of 16 hours a day, with very few breaks, seven days a week for the full eight months of the carnival season. The average length of time spent at each spot was one week, and the last day at a spot, usually a Sunday, was the most demanding: after 16 hours of work, tear-down of the carnival began immediately. Tear-down took approximately six hours, and the carnival convoy then began the drive to the next spot, known as "making the jump".

It might appear obvious to many that this description fits neatly into a Marxist analysis of capitalism with owners exploiting workers to an inhumane extent in order to maximize profits. The weakness to this kind of conceptualization, however, is that it ignores two very important factors: The first is that no one forced these workers to work at these jobs; in fact, most of the carnival workers that I interviewed did have other job opportunities in more conventional occupations. The second fact is that such an analysis ignores gender, of both the workers and the work itself. In order to complete the picture, it is necessary to look to the workers themselves to understand why they participated in this kind of work. It may be accurate to state that, economically and objectively, the carnival owners exploited the workers to gain financially. However, socially and subjectively, carnival work provided the workers with a sense of identity and meaning that had far less to do with economy; rather, the work reflected and maintained a strong adherence to masculine ideals that

transcended any simplistic Marxist explanation.

As I have already discussed, there are many variations in constructions of masculinity, based on race and social class. Masculinity as a concept is closely aligned to patriarchy, and can be more appropriately defined as "sets of culturally available, recognized and legitimated themes...which are identified with certain aspects of being a man in a given society" (Morgan 1992:96). Men bring these social attributes to their workplace which offers a location for their use. It is the work location, therefore, that simultaneously provides the environment for male norms and establishes the limits for the variety of masculinities that may be practiced. Although many work locations now provide little opportunity for the use of great physical strength for men, these characteristics are often played out in the form of social interactions and hierarchies. In other words, as David Morgan states, "the image of John Henry, the man who dies with a hammer in his hand, remains a potent one, despite a decreasing need for large hammers" (Morgan 1992:84). Although John Henry may now be carrying a cell phone and a briefcase instead of a hammer, he continues to also carry the practices of masculinity which inform broader systems of control and dominance of men over women and men over men. Paul Willis, similarly, notes that there are few difficult and unsavoury jobs today, but the social beliefs developed in such jobs are still very significant, particularly in the working-class culture (Willis 1979:190). The ideals of strength and heroism which are woven through masculinity may remain under other, more benign, forms of workplace culture, developed largely through technology and deskilling (see Cockburn 1985), but in working-class culture, masculine physical prowess remains a

powerful force that establishes the criteria for success as a worker and, simultaneously, as a male.

Carnival ride guy work is significant as it is one of the few working-class jobs where there has been relatively little deskilling, which is considered by many to be an erosion of traditional masculinities: it is an area of work where the capitalist system operates with its overt and physically demanding masculine components in full view. In other areas of work, much of the more strenuous and health-threatening aspects of masculine work have been limited and controlled by government legislation and trade unions designed to protect workers' rights. Sullivan Amusements remained untouched. Like a ship at sea, it moved from town to town, and from province to province. It was insulated from the outside world by its mobility and its owners proclaimed themselves to be immune from the social and legal rules of the outside world. Similarly, the workers themselves were either unaware of, or unwilling to call upon, the protection of legitimate government institutions and laws to ameliorate their harsh living and working conditions. The question of why the ride guys, particularly, chose to work such long hours under such harsh conditions can be answered by looking at the elements of protest masculinity as they appeared in this working-class culture, that existed in an isolated and insulated form, untouched by most of the greater social norms and regulations that have modified and humanized other industrial locations.

I draw largely on the 1979 work of Paul Willis in his article "*Shop Floor Culture, Masculinity and the Wage Form*" which, despite its age, continues to inform other work on working-class culture, notably Thomas Dunk's (1991) *It's a Working*

Man's Town. Other sociological literature informing this analysis includes D.W. Livingstone's and Meg Luxton's (1989) "*Gender Consciousness at Work: Modification of the Male Breadwinner Norm among Steelworkers and their Spouses*" and Gillian Creese's and Veronica Strong-Boag's (1995) "*Taking Gender into Account in British Columbia: More than Just Women's Studies*", as well as Ann Game's and Rosemary Pringle's (1983) *Gender at Work* and Gillian Creese's (1999) *Contracting Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Race in a White-Collar Union, 1944-1994*. While none of these studies focus on carnival work as such, they do emphasize the role of gender in the formation of ideas and practices at and about work; even more importantly, many point out not only the paucity of studies of masculinity in working-class culture, but also the importance of including gender in all studies of work domains in order to fully understand the role that gender plays in the formation of those work relations and the workers' own subjective experiences and understandings of their work domain.

Willis argues that capital forces workers to behave like robots but that workers' activities "provide the conditions of capitalist relations and also challenge those relationships (Willis 1979:187). Many working-class jobs have been, traditionally, unskilled or semi-skilled occupations that are, for the most part, repetitive and boring. People do, however, look for some kind of meaning. As Willis states, "they do thread through the dead experience of work a living culture which isn't simply a reflex of defeat" (Willis 1979:188). He argues that the brutal work conditions provide a fertile location for masculine pride, not recognizing his own

gender bias in ignoring that women also have worked, and continue to work, in equally as difficult conditions without being awarded, by self or others, kudos for bravery and endurance. His point is, however, that a workplace typified by hard manual labour does provide the setting where masculinist ideals and practices can flourish, an argument also echoed by Game and Pringle (1983).

Tear-Down at Sullivan Amusements

Evidence of masculine pride and practices resonated throughout the carnival, but nowhere was it embodied in more physical form than in the work of the ride guys. And nowhere was it seen in more concentrated form than during tear-down. I spent numerous hours wandering around the carnival lot during tear-down, and the strength and speed with which these men worked never ceased to astonish me. The call for tear-down came from the carnival owner, his son or one of their designates, at a time when the owner concluded that the carnival had “bled ‘em dry” (also referred to as “squeezing a nickel til they see beaver parts”), meaning that the carnival had wrung every last dollar out of the town in which it had played. In the two hours prior to the expected time of closing down the show, the ride guys changed into their tear-down clothes, which simply meant that they took off their carnival t-shirts and donned their own t-shirts and muscle shirts. There was always tension in the air as everyone awaited the call for tear-down. The ride guys would come over to the ticket box and ask, “Have you heard anything yet?”, as the ticket box’s closing signaled that the show would be closing soon (usually within 45 minutes, or whenever the customers had used their remaining ride tickets).

Immediately prior to a tear-down in a small town in Manitoba, I noted that:

The customers seem to be completely oblivious to the hive of activity that's going on and the buzz that's afoot, people running by, people putting on their tear-downs, the exchanges between ride guys and me, the questioning, raised eyebrows, grins, everybody knows, there's a buzz afoot now, this is it, the tension starts, and the energy level goes up (Personal Notes 8-3).

The ride guys munched on cheeseburgers and swallowed mouthfuls of pop and coffee as they awaited the call. Suddenly, the carnival owner bellowed "OK, that's it!" down the midway. And with the call for tear-down, a frenetic amount of activity began. One man from each ride immediately ran over to the carnival office with his box of ride tickets. Meanwhile, another ride guy began stripping off the belly cloths and ride scenery. Both then began to dismantle the ride, using wrenches and hammers to knock apart connections in the heavy metal. Meanwhile, huge trucks were driven onto the lot up beside the appropriate ride. Catwalks were taken apart piece by piece, with each section weighing about 500 pounds.

Often the only illumination for all this work came from the lights on the rides themselves, as tear-down almost invariably took place in pitch darkness (and pouring rain during the season I was with Sullivan Amusements). The ride guys wore no protective clothing whatsoever; there were no hard hats or steel-toed boots. They had to climb as high as 80 feet to dismantle some of the taller rides, with their own brute strength, working on parts weighing as much as 400 pounds, often using their shoulders and feet to support themselves and force these enormous pieces of metal away from each other. The work was conducted at astonishing speed and urgency, with constant communication in the form of loud yells and high-pitched whistles, in order to be heard over the almost deafening noise

that pervaded the entire carnival lot at all times¹¹⁰.

First to be dismantled and placed into the awaiting trucks during tear-down were the kiddy rides, as they were smaller and lighter. The kiddyland ride guys then rushed over to the major rides to assist. After about four hours of this labour, most of the rides were torn down. It took another three hours before the three biggest rides, the Skydiver, the Gravitron and the Orbiter, were torn down. While these rides were being dismantled, huge cables were disconnected. The last of the three generators would finally be disconnected resulting in no light at all, other than from the headlights of the remaining few trucks.

Once tear-down was completed, the ride guys, many of whom doubled as truck drivers, then proceeded to drive to the next spot which involved between three and twelve hours of driving. Often a driver would have to do a "double-back", which

¹¹⁰Noise, in fact, was an ever-present work condition in the carnival, producing often ingenious methods of communications. The following is an account of how such communication took place:

This morning I was watching about half an hour before opening, and Ted [ride guy and occasional electrician] did something to the generator at the back of the lot. He tried to communicate with somebody who was five rides away and between the noise of the generator and the distance, there is no way you can have any verbal communication. Again, it starts off with this high-pitched whistle, and he had to do it several times to get the attention of whoever it was, and it sort of passed along the line, as different ride operators catch the signal, and they carry it on til it gets to the one he wants, all with these high pitched whistles. [And on another occasion] I also saw him [Ted] using a hand and extended forefinger, in a large circular motion. Sam was standing near me so I asked him what it meant. He said, it means to reverse it. And I said, reverse what? And he said, to reverse the pattern of the ride, and then he said that when he crossed his wrists in front of him, it means to get it going the other way, and then the thumb to forefinger thing means it's OK, it's cool, leave it (Personal Notes 7-106).

meant returning to the previous lot to collect another ride, as there were not sufficient trucks to carry all the rides. The driver was not permitted to take a break during all this driving. After a couple of hours of sleep, the ride guys began the set-up, often not having eaten since the night before, and with no hope of eating until the set-up was completed some twelve hours later, as "drags" (their daily advance of \$30 on their wages) were not given out until the rides were all set up.

After watching my first tear-down, I asked myself: How is it even humanly possible for anyone to sustain such a high rate of intense physical labour, on a regular basis (as tear-down occurred at least once every week of the eight-month season)? I found the answer during an interview I conducted with a former carnival employee who had worked as a joint bum and a ride guy. This man came on to the lot when the carnival played in his home town in Manitoba. When I expressed my amazement at the behaviour of the ride guys during tear-down, he explained that they took bennies or speeders, which are a form of highly concentrated caffeine pills. According to him, they were bought in the United States by the carnival owners, in large quantities, and sold to anybody in the carnival (I myself was offered some at one point — I declined!) for a dollar a pill. The man told me that the ride guys took as many as a dozen bennies on tear-down night (and other ride guys told me later that they often consumed 30 during a tear-down), which explained the pinpoint eyes and the generally manic behaviour that I observed before and during tear-down. As my informant told me, "You never fuck with a ride guy on tear-down night!" (4-64).

During subsequent interviews, many of the ride guys readily admitted to

taking the bennies, saying it was the only way they could possibly get through tear-down and the long drive ahead. My ex-ride guy informant told me that the ride guys were able to operate with the strength of three or four men when they took the bennies. When I later questioned another ride guy about his use of bennies, he explained that they provided an enormous rush and energy that could "keep a man going without slowing down".

Ride Guy Skill

The difficult and relentless work done by the ride guys was considered by the other carnival employees to be unskilled labour and they referred to the ride guys as ride monkeys or bulldogs, inferring that their work was nothing but hard physical labour. This is in keeping with Willis' argument that many working class jobs are deemed to require no real skill (Willis 1979:191). There was no formal training involved in becoming a ride guy, but all of the ride guys that I interviewed had extensive backgrounds in a wide variety of semi-skilled manual jobs such as truck driving, heavy equipment operation, logging or farming. The skills needed were learned on the job, as if by osmosis, in an almost holistic manner. One ride guy, who had just joined the carnival three weeks before the interview, told me that when the foreman of the ride he was assigned to quit two weeks prior, he was left to run and tear down the ride by himself. He had received no training, as the foreman had simply told him what to do. He told me he drew upon his knowledge of farm equipment and truck engines and was able to figure out by himself how the ride came apart.

Such competence, according to Willis, is not simply based on the ability to do

the job, but the ability to do several jobs and solve any problem that the worker may face (Willis 1979:191). Practical ability always comes first, and is a prerequisite of other forms of knowledge. Dunk, similarly, stresses the importance of practical knowledge and its links to masculinity: "being able to repair and build things yourself...are intrinsic to notions of masculinity" (Dunk 1992:149).

It is in Willis' definitions of manual labour where the greatest similarities are found with the carnival ride guys and masculinity. While Willis acknowledges that masculinity runs through all of the elements of working-class culture, it is the "articulation of manual labour power [that contains] assertive male gender definitions" (Willis 1979:195). One of the most blatant examples of this with the ride guys was the inevitable preening and flexing that took place whenever I approached with my camera. It was difficult to take candid photographs of the ride guys, but my sense was that their posturing only served to underline the "assertive male gender definitions" — it demonstrated their tremendous pride in not only their work, but their bodies. A few of the younger ride guys appeared to be in superb physical shape, their bodies having not yet succumbed to the rigours of the hard labour and excessive drug and alcohol use. All the ride guys undertook their work with tremendous pride, often escalating their behaviour when an attractive female "local" was in eyesight. Even the older ride guys, whose bodies were emaciated and worn, reflected this same sense of bravado, truly proud of their job, their rides and their strength.

The "Feeding" of Protest Masculinity

One of the perks for ride guys was flirting with young, female customers. I

noticed that they were always very open in their admiration, staring, smiling and whispering comments to each other. They would often speak openly to the women, looking for any kind of response in the form of a smile, which would then elicit patter from the guys, thereby ameliorating some of the more arduous work conditions and providing them with female recognition and adoration, and praise for their manly displays of pride and sexual banter.

Another way that the ride guys wove their strong beliefs in the physicality of their jobs into their self-images of heroism and pride was through their relationships with the rides themselves. I recorded the following during one of the tear-downs:

Fiona: Three guys are tearing down the Spider: Sam, Ted and Jeff, which is astonishing, considering his injury! Hi, Ted!
How's the leg, Jeff?
Jeff: Can't feel it right now! Too many Advil!
Fiona: Oh, is that what you call them? [laughing] Sam's calling me.
Sam: [yelling] At tear down, you get to bench press a fuckin' bucket! See? [Two of them are pushing the ride bucket up.] There, that's the way you do it!
Fiona: How many bennies did you take?
Sam: You mean there are bennies around?
Fiona: You mean you didn't take any?
Sam: This is the real me! I'm strong enough. I can lift my buckets without them!
Jeff: I don't take 'em either, only once in a while. Only wimps need them! (8-2)

Tearing down and setting up rides came replete with the ride guys using language that reflected the anti-feminine framework within which the work and the ride parts themselves were perceived. During one set-up, I recorded one ride guy saying to another: "Hit the bitch!" referring to another ride guy trying to bash a bolt out of a three-foot long piece of metal. When the second ride guy was still

unsuccessful at removing the bolt, the first ride guy then said "Ah, you hit like a woman!" (and then, seeing me with my camera, he pulled his pants down, eliciting great gales of laughter from everyone watching, including me!).

The carnival rides were often referred to as "she" by their operators, again reflecting the notion that they were female and to be dominated or, at least, controlled by the male ride guys. Jack, a veteran ride guy with twenty-three years working for Sullivan Amusements, was the self-proclaimed foreman of the largest ride, the Skydiver, and took tremendous pride in setting it up and running it. In the following, he described the pride he feels in both the Zipper (another large ride) and the Diver:

Any ride I work on, I take pride in it. Like the Zipper, I used to have that thing just shining all the time, the lights were working and she was always in good running shape. Same thing with the Diver. I like the Diver. It's a heavy ride and nobody else likes it. Everybody runs from it. I run to it. It's a good workout. That's what I like about it, is the workout. Most guys'll go pay a thousand dollars to go to a gym and sweat in a gym. Here you get paid and you sweat on the ride, like you lift those [wind] sweeps. They're pretty heavy lifting by hand and you do the A-frames and you do those with your feet and you do the buckets with your arms and your back (20-5).

Other non-ride-guy carnival workers, however, often perceived the work described by Jack above as simply foolhardy and extremely dangerous. One of the independents told me his opinion of the Diver crew's work conditions:

When they had the Skydiver out, there was people crawling up and down the Skydiver. No harnesses, nothing like that. A lot of things out here, I think, should be hard hat areas, especially setting up and tearing down. They should be wearing steel-toed boots, but most people are wearing sneakers and a t-shirt, and they're climbing up and down, 20, 30 feet off the ground, steel bars everywhere, moving parts, slipping and sliding, and I'm

surprised nobody's been killed (Michael 12).

The bravado and the opportunity to impress female customers indeed helped to offset the difficulties inherent in ride guy work. Another benefit to working the rides, according to the ride guys, was collecting items that fell on the ground from riders' pockets, known as groundscores. The unwritten rule was: the bigger the ride, the better the groundscore opportunities. Consequently, rides were compared on levels of whether they were "good shakes" or "bad shakes". Jim, for example, told me he preferred working on the Zipper because it was a better shake, meaning that more money was shaken out of passengers' pockets onto the ground. All the ride guys regularly patrolled their area to check for change when they had few customers. They told me they had found things like glasses, false teeth, jewellery, and wallets, and were overjoyed when the federal government came out with the loonie and the toonie as they both made decidedly "good shakes" due to their weight. Found jewellery was often given by ride guys to female carnival workers. I myself amassed quite an impressive collection of single earrings, cheap plastic rings, and other 'tokens of affection'. At one spot, my tent was loked right behind the Diver and I found numerous groundscores around my tent: I noted one morning that my groundscore haul consisted of three lightbulbs (from the ride), half a lipstick and three loonies!

Taking it Like a Man

Willis argues that the difficulties encountered in the work domain are reinterpreted into a "heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task" (Willis 1979:196; see also Livingstone and Luxton 1989:253). Dangerous, arduous and

unpleasant jobs are not perceived as such, but as a suitable test of masculine bravado. As Willis states, "they are understood more through the toughness required to survive them, than through the nature of the imposition which asks them to be faced in the first place" (Willis 1979:196; see also Livingstone and Luxton 1989:253). For a carnival ride guy, the greatest test of manliness is the ability to "take it". As Jim put it,

Hey, the work's gotta be done. The rides have gotta go up and the rides have gotta come down. You just gotta do it. And if you don't do it, somebody else will and this is our job, rain or shine, snow, whatever, this is our job (2-2).

Many ride guys do not "make it"; the ride guy turnover is very high. The carnival travelled with a core group of about ten ride guys who had been with the show for many years, including one who had worked as a ride guy for twenty-seven years. Other ride guys joined the show as it travelled from town to town. Many did not survive past two or three tear-downs and simply disappeared into the night. Others were fired without notice, although never until tear-down was finished. Occasionally, fired ride guys would retaliate with some form of sabotage. The following is an account of one such incident concerning a very unpopular ride guy, who was considered boastful and arrogant:

Fiona: Jim's just come to the ticket box to tell me my favourite ride guy, ha ha, just got fired because he what?
Jim: He screwed up a few guys.
Fiona: He took a couple of valves off the air tank.
Jim: Right, to try and slow down the ride, stop them from using it.
Fiona: So what did he do to get fired?
Jim: Whole bunch of things, like blowing a transmission on his truck, flat tire, bad brakes, not setting up the ride properly, not doing his job, damaging stuff when he's not supposed to be.
Fiona: Well, had he been spoken to about this stuff?

Jim: A few times. He don't care. He's too stuck on himself.
Fiona: So is he gone?
Jim: No, he's been sitting in his truck for the last two hours (7-109/10)

Both Frank and John, who shared ride guy firing duties, told me that they are always on the alert for sabotage, and possible physical harm, by a fired worker. They both told me they always had about twenty guys watching them, in case the worker tried to retaliate for being let go.

Most ride guys who got fired did not attempt any kind of revenge, but did leave with a great deal of bitterness. I ran into one fired ride guy at a mall in central British Columbia, outside which he was panhandling for money for bus-fare back to his hometown in Saskatchewan. He had become very ill with pneumonia at this spot and had been fired after tear-down, the most common time for workers to be let go. His comments to me were:

They want you as long as you're able-bodied, but as soon as you're not able-bodied, they fire you. When I was given my papers [separation slip], I blasted Rachel, saying to her "I worked my ass off for you people. I worked like a dog for you people, and this is the thanks that I get". Rachel's response was the standard one which was "Thank you for your comments. Now, goodbye" (Roger 19).

During my travels with the carnival, several ride guys quit, telling me that they simply could not take the physical demands, coupled with little or no sleep or food, any longer, complaining bitterly about the extraordinarily difficult working conditions.

Sam, a young ride guy with six years' experience, told me on one occasion:

I can't do this any more. This will definitely be my last year. I can't take it any more. I'm twenty-one years old. I wake up every morning feeling like I'm forty-five years old. Everything aches. I'm exhausted all the time. I'm drinking way too much.

I'm drinking every night now and it's getting worse and worse as times goes on. I'm sick of the long hours and the shit pay (3-58).

For Sam, and many others, it seemed, even the bennies and masculine bravado were not always enough to sustain them (although Sam himself did manage to make it to the end of the season, continuing his heavy drinking habits).

Morgan refers to the ambiguities inherent in heavy labour. Although difficult work provides men with a heroic status, it is often highly unpleasant and dangerous work. He also highlights the association between particular constructions of masculinity and the avoidance of safety precautions at work (Morgan 1992:87). In contemporary and conventional work locations, this may translate into risk-taking that might have dangerous financial consequences or perhaps may impede or propel one's chances for advancement. However, in the carnival, the risks taken by the workers could be life-threatening.

During my time with the carnival, seven ride guys were injured and numerous others were often seriously ill with pneumonia and the flu. It was the expectation of the carnival owners and the workers themselves that the ride guys continued to work despite being injured or ill, as such conditions were always seen by the bosses to be the workers' fault. As Frank (lot supervisor) said to me, "it's their own stupidity" if they got hurt on a ride. They received no time off to heal, nor were they offered any monetary compensation benefits. Put simply, if they were unable to work, they were fired.

Jack, a veteran ride guy, related the following story of a ride guy, no longer with the show, and his numerous accidents and injuries. The levity with which Jack

told the story certainly revealed the light-hearted attitude taken by the ride guys, especially the older ones, towards such incidents and the blame that was placed squarely on the shoulders of the unlucky victim:

Some of these guys here they just don't pay attention to their rides. Like we had a couple of guys there last year, got an Orbiter bite [meaning injured by/on the Orbiter]. You know how fast the Orbiter goes. Well, it was coming down this one time and this guy stuck his head out there and the bucket hit him, right in the back of the head. It split the back of his head open and it drove him right into the checker plate, ripped the front of his face open. Came back [from the hospital] looking like Frankenstein. So they put him on the scooters [a kiddy ride]. They figured he'd be safe on the scooters. But you know how they got the tarp on the scooters? Well, it's got these little hooks on it to catch onto the catwalk. So he's on the catwalk there and he's going by and he's got this screwdriver and he's popping off the hooks. This one hook wouldn't come off, so he's holding onto the scenery [barricades] and the scenery's only fibreglass, so he finally puts all his weight into this screwdriver and it popped. The scenery broke, and he fell from the roof right down to the ground. Broke his ankle. So now he's looking like Frankenstein with a cast on his foot! [Gales of laughter]. He was really uncoordinated. You'd see him running across the lot and he'd stumble over his own feet, do a couple of head spins, get up and start running again! He quit after that last one. He'd been out here a few years. Every year he's always gotten hurt in some way. As long as I've known him out here he's always found some way to injure himself (Jack 17).

I noticed that it was at about the half-way mark in the season (four months in) that numerous incidents of injury and ill-health occurred. On two separate occasions, I drove ride guys to the hospital for medical treatment, and several times I voluntarily bought cough medicine and aspirins for workers. The following are some examples of such situations:

During set-up, I was sitting in the Pie Car having a beer when Bucky stumbled in, looking like the wrath of God. He sat down, clutching his temple, so I went over and said, are you all right? And he said, no, I just got hit by the door of the Orbiter. He had

a huge goose egg, so I said, I think you should go to the hospital. I went over to Rachel's trailer and she said, Paul's not here. And so I said, well, I'm going to take him to the hospital. So I took Bucky to the hospital. We were there til about 10:30 P.M. The doctor came in and we thought it might have been a concussion, and I said to the doctor, what should he do? The doctor said, well, he should take it easy. And I said, well, if he goes back to the lot, he's going to be put back to work, and the doctor said, no, he shouldn't; he should take it easy. So, Bucky said, well, give me a note then, and the doctor wrote him a note and we got back to the lot about quarter to 11 and I said, Bucky, are you going to go straight to bed? Naah, he said, I'll probably go and drink beer now! Which is fairly typical (Personal Notes 10-22).

Bucky went up to the hospital again the next day to get a shot of Demerol. He's got a severe pain with his back, and now he's on medication for his back which he put out when he got whacked in the head with the big fibreglass door on the Orbiter. The reason why he got whacked was the person who set it up was supposed to put some pins in for safety and they didn't put them in, and the wind caught it, and that's what whacked him (Personal Notes 11-8).

Another example is the following:

Jim told me a day or two before we left [spot in northern Alberta] that he had numbness and tingling down one arm and one shoulder and he went to the hospital. They told him he had pulled a muscle in his neck which was affecting his entire left arm, plus they discovered he had a lung infection and I said, well, you shouldn't be working, and he said, you have to! You just have to! You just have to keep going! And so there he was, faced with tear-down, and this injury, and he just carried right on (Personal Notes 10-23).

Bucky, mentioned above, continued to incur injuries as the season progressed.

During the day that I spent observing (and doing) work in the carnival office, Bucky came in holding his arm, in the morning just before opening, and the following conversation ensued:

Fiona:	Bucky, what have you done to yourself now?
Bucky:	Woke up, couldn't bend my elbow.
Fiona:	Did you injure it yesterday?

Bucky: I dunno.
 Fiona: [watching Rachel get a First Aid box out] So first aid is also on the list of jobs.
 Rachel: I have a cool little book, too, for reference. It's called "When Seconds Count".
 Fiona: Does anybody here have First Aid or CPR?
 Rachel: That would be me. I have to, for the show to have liability insurance.
 [Rachel then sends Bucky back to work, but he comes back about one hour later.]
 Bucky: Is Rachel here? I gotta go to the doctor, my arm's fuckin' throbbing.
 Rachel: Here's ten bucks for a cab to the hospital. Tell the doctor you just woke up like that, that you didn't do it on your ride, and make sure you get a receipt for the cab (Personal Notes 22-14).

The following is another example of the experience of an injured worker. Jeff and another ride guy were carrying an oil-covered 500 pound block of metal in the rain during set-up, when it slipped from Jeff's hands landing on his leg. He continued to work for another five hours, completing set-up of the ride, until the pain became unbearable. The carnival owner drove him to the local hospital and left him there. X-rays revealed a fractured thighbone, severe bruising and nerve damage. He stayed in hospital overnight, releasing himself in the morning and taking a taxi back to the lot in the morning in time for the 8:00 A.M. lot call. He told me with pride, "Yup, I never missed a minute's time, even though I can't walk twenty steps hardly without my left leg giving out on me and almost falling" (6-94).

Jeff was also one of the truck drivers, and continued driving right after his injury:

Jeff popped by for a chat on his way back to the Orbiter with a cup of coffee and I commented on how sartorially splendid he was and he said, the only reason he's dressed that way is because that's how he went to sleep last night. He said he went for two beer and got drunk as a skunk on the two beer because he was so tired

and he lay down in his bunk and woke up this morning still fully dressed. He said he got five hours sleep on the jump [town in eastern Manitoba to town in northern Alberta] and he was so sore he could hardly move, because he's a driver, and sitting for that length of time without being able to stretch his legs. He says, I can't believe I'm still doing this and I said, why are you still doing it? And he goes, sucker for punishment, I've been doing it for too long. So, methinks there is a degree of pride involved as well, keeping on working, that mark of manliness (Personal Notes 12-8).

Jeff continued to work, on crutches, for the next few weeks, and did manage to finish the carnival season.

At no time did any injured worker ever claim Workers Compensation Benefits for these injuries, despite provincial laws that all employees are covered. This was yet another illustration of "authorities" being kept outside the carnival, and for the carnival to avoid prosecution or, minimally, investigation as a consequence of the numerous industrial on-site accidents. In a conversation, Paul Sullivan concurred that no worker had ever claimed WCB benefits. When I asked him why, he simply shrugged his shoulders. Again, the masculine element of enduring pain and hardship impelled the ride guys, and the carnival owners, to perceive time lost from illness or injury as a weakness, rather than a sensible and logical health necessity.

Yet another source of injury to ride guys was truck accidents. Given that they usually drove the carnival ride trucks after 16 - 20 hours of work (including 6 hours of very hard physical labour), it is not surprising that there were numerous accidents on the jumps, despite the frequent use of bennies to keep them awake. Most of the driving was done through the night, to avoid weigh scales, as many of the carnival trucks were overweight. One of the seasoned drivers told me about a technique he

used to avoid the weigh scales:

You have to know when to go to sleep and know when they close. See, one of my favourite tricks was when you got to a town and you knew the scales were ahead. You phone up the scale and you ask them how late they're open til. And if the guy says why? You tell him, well, you're about six to eight hours behind and you need a permit, and he'd say, well, if you're six or eight hours behind, we close at 4 o'clock. You're never going to make it. So I would say, OK, I'll be sleeping there and I'll get a permit off you first thing in the morning. So the guy would say OK, we close at 5 or 4, so I knew enough to stop and wait til maybe 5:30 to give him time to get out of the office, so when I drove by he'd be closed. I did this 'cause I didn't have a Class One licence, and also some of the vehicles are overweight (Jack 16/17).

Up until the year I was with Sullivan Amusements, few, if any, of the truck drivers held Class One licences, which were the legal requirement for truck drivers.

However, after getting audited by the Department of Transportation in 1995, Sullivan Amusements insisted on all their drivers having Class One's. Nonetheless, I knew of numerous occasions where people without Class One's were recruited to drive trucks.

To my knowledge, there were no truck accidents during my time with Sullivan Amusements. But Jack, the veteran ride guy and driver, told me of numerous accidents in prior years. He referred to Sam falling asleep at the wheel of a truck, and going face-first through the windshield after the truck went over a cliff, cutting his face badly. He also told me of an incident in 1993 in Manitoba, where the truck carrying the Spider crashed into a farmer stopped to make a turn:

The farmer that was in the turning lane didn't see the Spider truck and he [the farmer] hit the centre of the trailer, and knocked the whole thing right into the ditch, wiped out the Spider. There was arms and buckets everywhere, and the

driver was pinned behind the wheel and up to his chin in water. Anywhere deeper and it would have drowned him. They had to cut the roof right off the truck and use the Jaws of Life to get him. The driver didn't have a Class One. The Class One driver was asleep in the sleeper and it was a good thing he was in the sleeper 'cause if he was in that passenger seat he would have been dead. The roof came right down on top of him and he had just enough room to climb out (Jack 16).

Rarely were accidents or injuries ever framed by the ride guys as anything other than an heroic exercise — just another way of expressing their manliness and ability to withstand danger, emerging from the experience even stronger. Paradoxically reinforcing their attitudes towards injuries was the reaction of the carnival bosses that all accidents were the result of the ride guys' own stupidity. Accepting the blame fully, the ride guys made sense of the experiences, more often retrospectively than at the time they occurred, by re-framing them into almost mythical proportions of near brushes with death and seeing themselves as true heroes, thereby negating the derision of the carnival bosses.

Humourous Trickery

Another significant technique that served to ameliorate the difficult and often dangerous work for the ride guys was the seizing of any opportunity to play tricks on people, never with malicious intent, but occasionally with substantial material rewards. A theme that resonated throughout the carnival was that one would be a fool to let an opportunity pass that might bring in some extra cash or other perk¹¹¹.

¹¹¹I was "educated" into this tenet early on in the research. I always made double copies of my photographs, offering them to the subjects in the photos. I did not charge money, as I felt it was they who were doing me a favour by allowing me to photograph them. Jim, one of the first ride guys that I befriended, took me aside and said "Look, Fiona, charge them a buck for each photo. Nobody ever does anything for free in the carny, and they'll

The ride guys did not have sufficient personal resources to engage in any ongoing extra-curricular economic activity, but did seize any chances to extort liquor or curry favour with people who did have more material or financial privilege. These transactions were kept very quiet, so as not to incur the wrath of the carnival bosses, but the ride guys often told me about them with tremendous glee.

A typical example of this was a situation where, upon finishing tearing down a ride at a spot, two ride guys found a large (and expensive) electric cord, accidentally left behind by one of the joint lines. They instantly realized the potential possibilities therein. Upon arrival at the next spot, they approached Gary, the joint line owner, and told him they had the cord, but that it would cost him two bottles of rum to get the cord back. They told me with great hilarity that Gary was utterly furious with them, but they stood their ground and, the next day, two bottles of rum came their way, upon which they returned the power cord.

Another manipulative practice, one that occurred on several occasions over the season by veteran (and, therefore, valuable) ride guys, was to start a rumour that they would be leaving 'at the next spot'. With no real intentions of doing so, they would take great pleasure in watching various members of the carnival royalty dashing around to people, asking whether the rumour was true or not. Waiting until

respect you for charging them. Otherwise they'll think they're getting one over on you" (3-14). Sure enough, the carnies gladly paid \$1 for each photo, which helped defray the cost of developing. Another example was cigarettes. I was told very early in the research never to "loan out" a cigarette, but to charge money. I charged 25 cents a cigarette, and was constantly inundated with buyers. I then discovered that the Pie Car charged 50 cents a cigarette, so I upped my price so as not to incur the wrath of the Pie Car people for undercutting them. Again, the response to this was respect for my business acumen.

the last minute, they would finally burst into roars of laughter, saying "Hey, I was only kidding!". This type of behaviour did not result in any enticements of higher wages or time off from the bosses, but did supply the instigators with tremendous satisfaction at witnessing the upheaval their rumours were eliciting.

Conclusion

It is indeed true in the case of the carnival that "the working class culture of the work place ...exists in hard conditions set by others" as Willis states (Willis 1979:187). However, it is equally true that these hard conditions are tolerated and even glorified by the masculine occupants of the work domain. Gender plays more than a central role in male working-class culture: it underscores and reproduces the very beliefs and practices that it shapes. I have demonstrated, through this analysis of ride-guy carnival labour, how social constructions of masculinity informed the organization and implementation of ride-guy work, to the extent that issues of safety and health disappeared under the mandate of "making it" which, in the case of the ride guys, was synonymous with physically surviving labour conditions almost unheard-of in contemporary industrial settings. It is also important to point out that, although most of the ride guys who worked on the largest and, therefore, most labour-intensive rides were Aboriginal or Metis, all the ride guys displayed the same elements of protest masculinity that formed the foundations and rationales for this extremely difficult and dangerous work.

In the next chapter, I explore another element of protest masculinity -- violence -- that occupied an extremely significant place in the organization of work and social relations in Sullivan Amusements.



Ride guys during tear-down of the Gravitron in the dark



Cynthia (L) and Rachel (R) instructing ride guys before a large exhibition

Chapter 8

Blanket Parties, Baseball Bats, and Broken Hands: Violence as the Means of Control and Expression in Protest Masculinity

Take a good look at the people you're talking about that are part of the circle, those that do the beatings and those that get them. Generally speaking, they've all done time. They're street people. They all come from very different backgrounds than the one you've heard about today [meaning his]. Probably very few come from close-knit families, educated families. It's the only thing that would work on them. There is no police service in this country that could manage these people the way that the show has been able to through the pecking order, through the physical threats and so on, in terms of keeping people in check. And it's not always the biggest guy who has the rule of the ship. There's a lot of people out here that wouldn't even dream of touching me. Is it 'cause I'm a fighter? Do I look like the fighting type? Do I look physically intimidating? No, it's not like that. It's a level of respect that's earned. And you know, it's just the way it is. And if you are in the unfortunate role of being some guy that has to crawl up scaffolding and work until crazy hours [referring to ride guys], like if you're willing to do that for what you get paid, which isn't much, well, that says something about you (Roy 7).

Introduction

In Sullivan Amusements, violence (both direct and threatened) was used in a variety of ways, but the underlying intent of all forms of violence was to maintain social order. It was the ultimate consequence of any personal or group attempt at insurrection of any established position of power in the carnival. An important element in the violence was reciprocity, a compulsion to extract justice in the way of physical overpowerment in order to achieve social power over the 'loser' in the fight. As Kimmel states, "the hegemonic definition of manhood is a man in power with power and of power" (Kimmel 1994:124). Throughout the carnival, the constant need to re-assert power, both formally and informally, manifested itself in violence and threats of violence.

Upon reflection, after completing the research, I realized that there was a

continuum inherent in the range of forms of violence in the carnival — a continuum which correlated to the visibility of each form. In other words, the 'milder' the violence, the more open and observationally available it was. The more severe the violence, the more deeply hidden it was inside the carnival culture. In fact, not everybody knew about the more sinister forms of violence. Only those deeply entrenched in the social fabric of the carnival culture were aware of them: many of the more distanced independents (and their employees) did not know about them at all. I was slightly skeptical, earlier in the research, when I was first told of the beatings, but shortly thereafter I was convinced of their veracity, after being told by so many people, including eye witnesses.

Connell (1995) comments that "the politics of masculinity...concern questions of social justice" (Connell 1995:82-83). To sustain a level of inequality that serves the interests of the dominant group requires the use of physical force that takes two general patterns. The first, informed by "an ideology of supremacy" (Connell 1995:83), is the imposition of violence by those in power over those who are seen to threaten their privileged position or, simply, as a direct statement of that power. The assertion of power can range from whistling at women through to rape, domestic violence and murder, and is justified by the belief in the superiority of the group (Connell 1995:83). The key characteristic of this form of power, however, is its collective nature: the perceived right by men, as a general category, to constantly state, and re-state, their position of authority over others.

The second pattern involves power relations between men, a form of gender politics: "terror is used as a means of drawing boundaries and making exclusions"

(Connell 1995:83). While Connell refers to group violence against marginalized masculinities (such as gay men) or between marginalized masculinities (e.g. inner-city gang violence) as being the most common manifestation of this particular pattern, it is also the case that such techniques are used predominantly in groups where protest masculinity is performed. The emphasis on the body as a tool and a weapon is significant in working-class cultures, and even more so where little of mainstream societal rules and conventions that limit or contain the forms of violence are found or embraced.

While Connell discusses the patterns of violence in the context of their being limited to male practitioners, I found that many of the female carnival workers also used similar tactics, attesting to the argument that women also can, and do, perform masculinity. Much of the evidence that I provide below, however, refers to violence among and between men, mainly because of the numerical dominance of men in Sullivan Amusements. Nonetheless, I also point out situations where women also used techniques of violence that reflected both of Connell's (1995) patterns.

I now explore the various forms of violence that I located in Sullivan Amusements, all of which follow Connell's patterns as described above, and which ranged from verbal forms of social control that contained strong implications of violence, through to the "beating crews", men selected (or, often, coerced) into carrying out physical violence on carnival workers (usually male) perceived to have broken one of the many unwritten rules of appropriate carnival conduct.

Verbal Violence and Deprivation

In keeping with Connell's (1995) explication of two patterns of violence found

in masculinist groups, the relations between the carnival bosses (both male and female) and workers typified the mildest type of violence, in the form of a very distinct speaking style, designed to assert the power of the owners over the workers. With loud, barking tones, the bosses made verbal demands of the workers, using words and inflections that did not invite discussion or any response other than total and immediate obedience.

My first experience with this style of speaking occurred within the first week of my travelling with Sullivan Amusements. I had spent two days with Rachel and Paul, travelling in their convoy to observe a carnival in Saskatchewan, sleeping on their fifth wheel trailer's couch (sheer luxury after several nights in a soggy tent and filthy truck trailer!). We arrived as a group at the next spot, where the carnival workers had been spending the morning setting up rides and joints. As we climbed out of our respective vehicles, about six ride guys, looking exhausted and hungry, swarmed Rachel and Paul, asking politely if drags were available, so that they could buy some food. Without even looking at them directly, Paul barked out "We just got here! Leave us alone!", and slammed the door of the fifth wheel trailer in their faces. The group looked devastated, and simply turned around, looking defeated, and returned to their tasks.

Initially, I found this to be quite puzzling as, in my conversations with the various levels of carnival bosses, their speaking style was generally calm, non-threatening, and friendly. But then I began to notice on even more occasions that when they spoke to low-level workers, their verbal style shifted to one of autocracy, indifference and coldness. It was as if two different personalities dwelt within and

they were able to call upon the required 'persona' to fit the occasion. When I first observed this dichotomy, I decided to discuss it with a carnival worker who was related to several of the key carnival personnel. Her father and two uncles, all independents, were bosses of large joint line crews and she told me how shocked she was the first time she heard one of her uncles bellowing at his workers, as it was inconsistent with the way she knew him to behave privately.

I was at the receiving end of this kind of speech on two occasions, and reacted with shock and, later, anger. During an interview that I was conducting, Dwight, the lot man, strode up and bellowed something and then strode away. I did not hear his actual words, but realized that they were delivered with anger. I followed after him and asked him what he had said. He turned around and yelled "Move your fuckin' car!". Taken aback, I told him that I parked it where I had been told to by Gary, the man usually responsible for loking vehicles. He yelled back at me: "I don't give a fuck! Move your fuckin' car!!". No reason was given by him; I was simply expected to obey his command. I discovered later that the space was needed to set up part of the joint line, but none of this information was included in the rudely barked order to remove my car. This was a man I had spoken to on many occasions and who had always been most accommodating and, indeed, a source of much useful historical carnival information. My response was a desire to treat him coldly for the remainder of the season but the sociologist in me chose to use the experience as personal testimony to the emotions felt when at the receiving end of what was, indeed, a form of verbal abuse.

However, most of the other workers deemed this kind of treatment to be

natural and normal. In a discussion with one of the ride guys about the way they were spoken to, he said that, in his work experience, including jobs external to the carnival, this was typical of the way that bosses treated workers. Through conversations with Rachel and Paul, I learned that this dictatorial manner of speaking to the workers arose out of the contempt the bosses have for their workers, and their opinion that the workers were, overall, stupid and worthless.

But a few other workers shared my opinion that this tactic of speaking abruptly and didactically to "the help" (as the bosses often referred to the workers) was extremely counter-productive to the mission of earning respect. Those who disagreed with the speaking style were people for whom this was their first, and probably only, season, and who were used to working in jobs where employees were treated with more respect. The following is an excerpt from an interview I had with one such employee, a highly educated (holder of a Master's Degree) individual who had a full-time, albeit seasonal, professional job over most of the winter months, and was horrified when first spoken to by Paul in such a manner:

Roy: When you asked me about what I don't like about the carnival, it's not being treated with respect. When I get treated like a child, I become very obnoxious.

(I then tell him about my experience, described above, and mention how I lost respect for the person responsible.)

Roy: Right, you lose respect. It goes away and it can't be gained. Like for him to gain it back, there would have to be a lot of goodwill before you'd even think about it. Those kinds of things really get on my case, and those are the type of professional things that you don't see in other types of industry. They're there, but they're not as in your face, not as abrupt, and it's almost slanderous when it happens out here. Like when that happens to me, I just leave, off the lot.

Fiona: I've been told that there's a long history of this way of treating carnival employees. I was told that this is the only way that you

can control the ride guys: you treat them like dogs.
Roy: Yeah, the dogs that they are [said sarcastically] (Roy 7).

Another form of violence involved the withholding of certain perceived privileges from the carnival workers. I use the term 'privileges' rather than 'rights' deliberately. In most mainstream occupations, the opportunity to use a bathroom, have a meal and receive scheduled time off are now considered to be automatic rights of employees. But in Sullivan Amusements, these were seen to be privileges, which meant that they could be taken away at any time as a form of punishment. Given that most of them are connected with a person's health and well-being, the denial of such opportunities was tantamount to a form of physical abuse. The purpose of such deprivation was always dual: immediate punishment for a perceived infraction, and a lesson for everyone else not to commit the same offence in the future.

A frequent occurrence was the withholding of drags (as mentioned above). Normally, drags were available from about 11 AM onward, or as soon as the office was able to organize the cash needed. But if even one worker was late for lot call, or if the trucks were not washed to the superintendent's satisfaction, then all workers suffered from having drags withheld for hours (often into the evening), which meant no meals, drinks or cigarettes for the workers. Many times the withholding of drags was accompanied by an early lot call as further punishment. The following is an excerpt from my notes on one such incident:

Paul told me there was a breakdown of one of the pieces of equipment from [large Alberta city] that Pierre was driving, and the clutch went and so he was stuck for many hours in [small Saskatchewan town]. Rachel had to phone and give

them her Visa number to pay for this clutch job. They are blaming Pierre for the wrecked clutch. Paul told me that because of a few people getting up to no good the day before, yesterday there was a lot call for 8 [A.M.]. They worked from 8 in the morning until 10 at night and there were no drags, so there was no food and it was an 8 o'clock lot call today too, so this is what happens — sort of punishment, where the whole works get punished for the actions of a few (Personal Notes 5-87).

Even worse than having drags withheld were the fines that were often imposed on ride guys for being late. The progression of fines was \$10 for one day, \$15 for the next consecutive day, with continued increases of \$5 a day. To add to the punishment, the names of those being fined were often posted outside the office, presumably to inform them why their drags were smaller than usual, but also to reinforce the “rule” to the other workers that lateness was not tolerated.

The form of punishment that the workers loathed the most, however, was the lack of breaks during their work day/night. Not being able to leave their ride or game meant no chance to go to the bathroom, or buy food or drink, so it was actually a three-dimensional punitive act. Some of the workers were philosophical about these conditions, especially the joint workers who were lucky if they got two half-hour breaks over a 13-hour shift in their joints (and they were never permitted to sit down while working, even if there were no customers). They dealt with it stoically, taking surreptitious pees behind their joints when the bosses weren't around, or simply limiting their liquid intake.

The ride guys, however, were much more vocal about their anger at this kind of treatment. Sometimes the inability to take breaks was the result of a shortage of personnel on the rides. If someone had been fired, or quit, often only one ride guy

would be running the ride. The ride guys would often dart over to me in the ticket box complaining loudly that they had not been broken for several hours, this despite the fact that, by law, there had to be at least two ride guys on each ride. In the following conversation, I asked a ride guy why another, a veteran of several years, had suddenly quit and left the show:

Fiona: Why did Morris leave?
Vinny: At [central B.C. town, a very busy spot] him and me couldn't take any more breaks that one night. That's the reason why. I sat on my ride for five hours. He sat on his ride for five hours.
Fiona: Nobody was breaking you?
Vinny: Like, we both had to be there (Vinny 2).

It was also the case that ride guys were not permitted to take breaks simply as punishment for being late, or not preparing their rides sufficiently. There were numerous incidents of ride guys who did not leave their rides for an entire shift, again being forced to urinate behind their rides and beg others to get them food and drink. Sometimes they did not even know what they were being punished for. What was significant, however, was that, by the next day, no grudges were ever held against the bosses, in keeping with the overall attitude of most carnival workers that such oppressive work conditions were inevitable and natural.

Another form of punishment by the royalty was to keep the show open later than was necessary, which usually resulted from someone caught 'cheating' the night before. Cheating referred to starting to tear down a ride, joint or other concession before the show was officially closed. With the exception of the carnival rides, all other joints and amusements had to have some type of work done to them after the show closed, such as storing stuffed animals, or bringing down a tarp. If a

worker was caught cheating, the entire carnival suffered the next day by being forced to stay open long after the last customer had left.

Fighting Each Other

Although not nearly as visible as the above forms of violence, fights between ride guys or between joint bums, as well as between both groups, were common. Reasons varied from a neophyte worker being considered too arrogant and needing to be “put in his place”, to rivalry over females, to unpaid debts, to ratting someone out, to thefts, which were common given the scarcity of any kind of resources and the unlocked “living spaces” of the workers. From speaking to many of the carnival workers, I learned that respect was a central issue in many of these personal fights. The winner of the fight always emerged as the person with the most respect but, interestingly, the willingness of the victim to “take it” and remain with the carnival was also a marker of respect.

Fighting with Locals

Fighting with a local on the lot was considered unacceptable by the carnival bosses except under one circumstance: if the ride guy's ride was in danger of being damaged, then it was expected that all ride guys would run to the aid of the ride guy whose ride was in jeopardy. At one of the busiest spots that the carnival played, the word went around the lot that there were a lot of drunken locals milling about “looking for trouble”. As I watched the ride guys, I noticed that each of them calmly picked up a tool, or a piece of wood, and took an aggressive and confrontational stance in front of their rides. One local did make the mistake of taking a punch at Bucky, one of the toughest ride guys: with one swing, the local was felled, and the

other locals nearby quickly retreated from the ride.

According to the ride guys, there was a long-standing rivalry between locals and ride guys, which seems to have developed out of combination of two factors. The first was that male carnival workers were considered to be complete scum by local males and worthy of fighting. Rivalry over local females was the second element involved in the rivalry. Most of the fights between locals and carnies took place in bars and dance clubs off the lot and I was frequently regaled with stories of triumph the morning after a particularly successful run-in with local young men.

The Beating Crew

Continuing to follow the first of Connell's (1995) patterns of violence in masculinist cultures, I now examine the so-called "beating crew", the most hidden form of carnival violence. The beating crew was comprised of several particularly tough male carnival workers who were called upon (usually by a worker's immediate superior) to literally beat up a (usually male) worker for infractions such as stealing money from their aprons (in the case of joint bums), or protracted laziness (on the part of ride guys), the most common causes of the beatings. Those who beat up ride guys were selected members of the ride guys, usually veteran workers who had reputations for toughness, resilience and total loyalty to the carnival. The several joint bum "beating crews" were joint line supervisors, former joint bums who, again, were "lifers" who had demonstrated loyalty and trustworthiness to the owners of the joint lines.

The beatings were, in many respects, a last resort, after other avenues had failed. The most common process in employee 'reprimands' was a rather informal

system that began with the worker's peers speaking to him or her privately, telling them to 'shape up'. If that failed, then the worker's supervisor would do likewise. If this also failed to produce the desired results, then a beating would take place, always at night and often around three or four o'clock in the morning when the victim was sleeping. If the victim was a ride guy, the beating crew would quietly enter his cabana, throw a blanket over him and proceed to beat him up, often with sticks of wood. If it was a joint bum, the victim would be taken behind the joint line, out of sight, and beaten severely, often while the carnival was open, but always in pitch darkness.

When I first learned of this practice, it explained why I often saw ride guys and joint bums with black eyes, limping badly, with no plausible explanation. Once I got past my personal horror, I began to ask questions about why this step was necessary — why did the worker not simply get fired? The answer was that it was necessary to set an example for the other workers, so that they would not be tempted to "fuck the dog" (be lazy) or break any of the other unwritten carnival rules of conduct. It was only if the victim of the beating continued to refuse to comply with expected levels or quality of work after the beating that the worker would be fired (or, often, the worker simply disappeared from the lot).

"Carny justice", as the beating system was referred to, was not always carried out by willing participants. Several ride guys expressed their distaste for the practice, while others told me of instances where they were coerced into carrying out the beatings. The penalty for not complying with the request was a high risk of being fired and/or being beaten themselves. One former Sullivan ride guy who went

to work for an independent ride owner told me the following about the beating crews:

Vic: I think it's [beatings] wrong. It's wrong because if they really want somebody off the lot, they don't have to beat them, you know. It's bad enough that they do that, because it does happen, you know, and I've been in the situation where I've had to do it or lose my job.

Fiona: Oh, you had to do it?

Vic: Or lose my job, and get the same thing to happen to me. If they don't want somebody on the lot or somebody's causing problems for them, and they don't like it, they'll get a crew of guys to go into their bunk, drag them out of their bunk.

Fiona: It's usually done in the wee hours, right?

Vic: It's done right in the morning, when everyone is sleeping. I've had a couple of times where some guy's mouthed some people off and it's the wrong people and they've come right into the cabana and dragged him out by the scruff of their head, beat him to a pulp, so they sent him to hospital, broken ribs, legs, fingers and stuff.

Fiona: Has anybody ever laid criminal charges against...?

Vic: They can't prove anything because everything they do, like if somebody got beat, and they tried to come back, they'd just say, oh, it was somebody else, some local beat him up. You know? They've always got a coverup story for that. It's always been that way. They keep their nose out of it that way. If that crew that beats them up retaliates and says that no, this person told me to, otherwise, dah, dah, dah, this would happen to me, and stuff like that, then you know the same thing would happen to that person.

Fiona: So none of the victims ever go to the police, because of the fact that they'll just deny it.

Vic: Yeah.

Fiona: What kind of rule infractions would bring on a beating?

Vic: If you make Sullivan mad, if you do something he doesn't like, or if you show up to the ride drunk, or if you're just using way too many drugs. Out of the five years that I've been here I've seen thirty people get their heads kicked in for pretty much nothing. There's a couple of times I've seen guys sitting under the ride, having a joint, because they've been so tired or whatever, that somebody's caught them, gone to Sullivan and ratted them out, and then Sullivan will come back to the ride and he'll either have a couple of guys with him, or just wait til you're asleep.

Fiona: Does Sullivan himself ever do any of the beatings?

Vic: No, he just tells them to do it (Vic 29-2).

Vic also related to me an incident where he was the recipient of an attempted beating. He had arrived late at his ride one day (while under Sullivan's direct employ), and Sullivan had grabbed him, whereupon Vic took a swing at him. He told me that, that night, four guys came into his cabana, but that he was able to fight them off. He was, however, able to see their faces and told me who the four members of the beating crew were: the names were the same as those given to me by others.

Another ride guy told me that he was told to participate in a "blanket party", beating up a fellow ride guy who was considered lazy and who had not shaped up to the foreman's liking. This ride guy outright refused to comply, but did not receive any punishment directly, as he was already on the office's list to be fired after the next tear-down: he had been ill for several days and was considered to be working too slowly.

Joint bum beatings were usually conducted by joint foremen, people who rarely worked in the joints themselves anymore, and who had been elevated to supervisory positions that included the task of collecting the money out of joint bums' aprons. The most heinous 'crime' a joint bum could commit was to pocket any of the money, an act almost guaranteed to result in a severe beating behind the joint line, resulting in broken arms and fingers. Several workers told me about observing such beatings, which often appeared to be carried out with weapons in the form of baseball bats or 2" X 4" pieces of wood. I shall describe two incidents of joint bum beatings that were brought to my attention:

I had gone into the carnival office one morning to collect my ticket box bag

and observed a police officer talking to Paul. All I heard was the police officer saying "I'll let you take care of it. I know you have your own ways of handling these things". Having no idea what was going on, I asked Paul (carefully adding that I was asking in my role as sociologist, not nosy ticket seller). Paul told me a couple of joint bums had trashed a hotel room and stolen a television from the room, the night before, and that he had given the police officer money to cover the damages. Later that morning, while I was in the ticket box, a carnival worker, Butch, whose job was a form of bouncer/protector of some of the old flat store agents, strolled over to me and boasted about beating up Malcolm with a two-by-four. I asked him why and he said that he had lent them his credit card so they could get a hotel room. They registered using his name, so he was found responsible for the damage and theft. As he put it "I've got a long criminal record and I don't need this shit!". Later, another joint bum told me in private that he had observed the entire incident:

Peter: I saw Jesse's [the other joint bum], and that was done by [two joint line owners and a joint supervisor]. Butch did the other guy [Malcolm] out by the trailers. I saw one punch from Butch against Malcolm, out by one of the bunkhouses, and it was one shot and the guy hit the ground and then Butch grabbed a two by four. And then I was around the back of the joints and Jesse hadn't gotten up. He was still passed out drunk in the back of the truck and [joint supervisor] had climbed into the back with one of those big nylon stock bags. And they put that over Jesse while he was sleeping and paddled him with a couple of the boards that were in the back, jumped out, pulled down the door and locked him in there and left him. And they didn't figure anybody had seen this. I'm standing at the corner of one of the joints and I guess Jesse finally clued in, woke up in the back, black and blue from being hit, didn't know what happened, tried to get out to have a leak, and ended up taking a leak inside — you could see it coming out the back. And [joint line supervisor and owner] noticed me standing there and they said, what did you see? And I said, I seen everything, man. I saw you getting

into the back. They said, don't say nothing. Well, who do I say it to, and who's going to believe me! Like, all I gotta say is it better not happen to me because if it does happen to me, I'm gonna flip and I'll go after the people that I know set it up. Like it doesn't happen just because. It's done for a reason and it better be a good reason.

Fiona: Why did they put the bag over him?

Peter: Because the back door was open so there was light coming in and they don't want you to see who's doing it to you, right? The door was only partially open, and [two joint owners] were on the outside and they sent [joint supervisor] in. They pulled the door down and all I could hear was bash, bash, bash. Then the door opens and [joint supervisor] hops out and the door comes down (12-13).

I learned that Malcolm was severely injured by Butch, fired and thrown off the lot, but Jesse, although beaten, did not lose his job. The reason for this apparent disparity in punishment for what was essentially the same 'crime' was that Jesse was a better joint worker: put simply, he made more money for the bosses, so he was a more valued commodity than was Malcolm. Malcolm was apparently a poor worker who made little money. Therefore, he was considered more expendable and a worthy victim to set an example for others not to bring "heat" to the carnival.

The second incident that was related to me by an eye witness illustrates the practice of conducting beatings while on jumps, always on remote roads where there were no observers (other than the beaters and other riders in the vehicle).

Kathy, a female joint bum, told me with horror of a beating of two male joint bums that she witnessed:

Yeah, [joint supervisor] gets a kick out it. He thinks it's funny. He laughs all the time. There was a couple of people [names them] that were on our joint line that were taking money from the apron and they dropped them off and kicked the shit out of them and all [joint supervisor] did was brag about it. That was on our way from our jump from [western location]. We were

afraid that they'd dropped one of the guys off the cliff. I was terrified. Me and [another female joint bum] were up in the kick [storage compartment in top of truck] and [two other female joint bums] were there too, one was only 14. I could hear [the victims] screaming, stop, please stop, 'cause we were in the kick at the top and the top window was open and [female joint bum] opened it to see what was happening and they literally gave the boots to these guys. They just dropped them off in the middle of the road. Us girls were told we were not to open the door for any reason, to just stay in, so none of us opened the door 'cause we were so scared. I didn't do anything about it and I felt I should have said or done something and I never did anything. I just laid there and let it happen, and I felt really bad. The order to do it came from [joint line owner] but it was done by [joint line supervisor and two male joint bums] (18-12).

Stealing money was not the only reason why joint bums were beaten. Many joint bums (especially those in the less lucrative joint lines) accrued large debts to their bosses. These debts mounted quickly, especially during the season that I was with the show, due to the consistently bad weather and poor crowds. Even worse than stealing money was the act of doing (or attempting) a "midnight run" -- leaving the lot in the middle of the night to avoid paying off the debt. Workers with large debts (\$200 - \$300) were watched carefully by the joint line supervisors, and were often loaned out to other carnival independents (such as food joints) in an attempt to earn money to pay off the debt. But if a worker ran and was caught, he or she would receive a severe and very deliberate kind of beating. The person's legs were broken first because "they got you away" (18-21), and fingers were next as they were crucial to a joint bum's ability to do his or her job.

Both males and females were at risk for this type of beating. A female joint bum quit after weeks of abusive behaviour from her supervisor including extremely limited opportunities for breaks. The final straw for her was not being allowed to go

to the bathroom: she quit on the spot. However, she was "into" her boss for over \$300 (meaning she owed him that amount). They did not beat her, but did throw her off the lot. She made the mistake of returning to the lot, as she had nowhere to go, had no money, and wanted to hide out in one of the carnival trucks. One of the senior Sullivan personnel asked me if I had seen her. I lied and said "no", although she had, just moments before, sneaked up to the ticket box to tell me what was going on. I casually asked the person looking for the girl (she was only 17 years old) what would happen to her if they found her. I was told she was in for a severe beating, as she broke a carny rule of coming back onto the lot after being fired. When she again crept up to the ticket box later, I warned her to get off the lot immediately, as several key carnival personnel were looking for her and she was in grave danger of getting hurt if she was found.

There were two themes that emerged from all the cases of workers being beaten for infractions. The first was that it was not necessarily the crime itself which was being punished. Rather, it was the *visibility* of the crime that drew the ire of the carnival bosses. As one ride guy told me, "it's only bad if you get caught", the underlying assumption being that if a person was doing something so blatantly that they were observed by a carnival worker, then there was an equal likelihood that the infraction was being observed by someone outside the carnival, thereby risking attracting the attention of the police which the carnival avoided at all costs. Another example of the kind of act that could bring on severe physical harm was ride guys fraternizing with "underage" girls (thirteen- or fourteen-year olds). I learned of several incidents where ride guys were beaten up because they were found drinking

and drugging with young girls in their cabanas. It was not the act itself which was seen as wrong or unethical: it was the fact that the ride guys were putting the carnival at risk of being descended upon by irate parents and police officers that drew the punishment.

The second theme was that any act that resulted in carnival owners losing *economically* warranted severe punitive measures: stealing from aprons, in the case of joint workers, or selling ride tickets, which was the ride guy equivalent of stealing money (pocketing ride tickets given by customers and selling them in bars later, rather than depositing them in the box at each ride). Both of these infractions were punished severely, again, not out of any particular moral outrage, but because the acts were seen as cheating the owners out of their rightful revenue.

Manipulation of the Carny Justice System

I learned of several incidents where workers deliberately undertook activities that would have warranted severe punishment and, for various reasons, avoided direct punitive reaction, the key to which was the target of their activities. One such incident involved a break-in and theft from the Pie Car. On a jump, the truck pulling the Pie Car had broken down, been disconnected from the Pie Car, and had been towed into the nearest town for repair, leaving the Pie Car on the side of the road. Several ride guys, in a truck pulling a ride, spotted the 'abandoned' Pie Car, and broke into it, stealing cigarettes, beer, and money. Due to the enormity of what was considered by the carnies as the ultimate in groundscores, word soon reached Rachel, who responded to the crime in the following manner:

Fiona: [during my day working in the office] OK, so this is a list of the

people who owe money to the show. Good Lord, look how much money Bucky owes.

Rachel: That's because they broke into the Pie Car [laughing]! We had to reimburse the Pie Car so it came out of their pay.

Fiona: Why didn't you fire them? Because you need them?

Rachel: No, because, let's see, not because we need them, but, like, Fred [owner of Pie Car] is a dink, and so we kept them on to spite him and, you know, it's not something that either one of them would usually do, and it was a dare, and it wasn't just them. It was just that they were the ones that got caught. So you can't just fire those two when there's like six of them involved.

Fiona: OK. What about bringing in the police in a matter like this? Is that ever a consideration?

Rachel: It's the Pie Car.

Fiona: Meaning that it doesn't actually exist (27-11/12).

I later learned that the 'crime' was subjectively interpreted as relatively mild primarily because of the dislike for Fred. In my notes, I recorded the following:

A little follow-up on this Pie Car robbery thing. Apparently, it depends largely on who is running the Pie Car. If whoever is running the Pie Car is well-liked, it doesn't get robbed, but when whoever is running it is disliked, it gets robbed quite frequently. It's quite common for it to get robbed and basically everybody stands back and cheers and hopes that whoever did it doesn't get caught. The main annoyance was that these guys got caught. Apparently on the jump from [one spot to another], [two ride guys] came across the Pie Car broken down on the side of the road, at a rest stop, with no truck around. And they apparently stood there, they said, for quite a while, quite a dilemma, deciding whether or not to break into it, because there was nobody around, but their ethics got the better of them and they decided not to. And Rachel was saying that when they told her this, she said, Jesus, why didn't you!! Because the irony, of course, is there's nothing that the Pie Car people can do about it because they don't exist, by law. They can't bring the law in. They just have to put up with it. Apparently when [another person] was running it, she was really well-liked, and it only got broken into about once. The reason why Fred is so disliked is he's really a backstabber. He'll pour booze down somebody's throat at night, even giving them free ones til five in the morning, being their great pal, and then the next day, will just bark at them and really be a total prick. So they've got bad reputations, the food has a bad reputation, and so they're kind of like sitting ducks (Personal notes 27-14).

In this case, a general dislike for Fred and Rachel's reluctance to fire six ride guys combined to provide a rationale for the break-in and theft that reduced the act to little more than a huge joke.

Another example of the rather creative techniques used in manipulating the carnival justice system was when Cece (the joint line supervisor) went into a hotel and learned that a joint bum had been posing as Ron Sullivan's son in an attempt to get a free hotel room. Cece could have reported this to Ron Sullivan immediately and the joint bum would have been beaten and thrown off the lot. Instead, Cece, who had some kind of vendetta against the joint bum, chose to keep this information to himself until a time when he needed a 'perk' from Ron Sullivan and would then have the added pleasure of seeing punishment meted out to the joint bum. As he phrased it to me "This is great! Payback's a bitch! Don't ever let anyone tell ya that revenge ain't sweet!" (30-15).

Underscoring both of these examples was the tenet that an act only became a criminal act if (a) the perpetrators were caught and (b) it was deemed that the act transgressed some informal carnival rule. In the case of the Pie Car break-in, the act was framed by Rachel as wrong only because the ride guys got caught, and the Pie Car had to be compensated for the money stolen. Cece, on the other hand, took full advantage of the knowledge that someone had broken a carnival rule and chose to keep it to himself to use in the future against the joint bum, thereby parlaying the knowledge into personal satisfaction as well as potential material gains.

Domestic Violence

This form of violence in the carnival was the most hidden (as most domestic violence usually is) and was almost universally reviled by all carnival workers: hitting a woman was considered to be the act of a coward and beneath contempt. I learned of several cases where female carnival workers were abused by their male partners and the general consensus was that the women were fools to permit the abuse, whereupon I would launch into a speech about domestic violence and why women stay in such relationships. In each situation, the relationships were long-standing, and involved older (40's to 50's) carnival workers. I was not aware of any domestic violence among younger workers, nor did I see any physical evidence (which I did with the others, in the form of black eyes and bruised faces).

Violence Practiced by Women

It is important to point out that violence was not practiced by the male carnival workers only. Many female workers also used violence as a way of asserting power, but it was always in a context of rivalry over a male carnival worker, usually a ride guy. It rarely took the form of actual physical violence, although threats of violence were a common ploy. The most common method was to personally discredit the female victim by spreading rumours that she was sleeping with one or more male carnival workers, in order to sabotage a relationship that she was having with someone.

I was actually the "victim" in one such instance, when I unwittingly incurred the wrath of one of the female ticket sellers, Shania, who positioned herself as the most sexually attractive female in the carnival culture. She was very jealous of my friendship and popularity, particularly with the male carnival workers. After several

months of petty punitive acts towards me (such as hiding my ticket box chair and spreading a rumour that I was an undercover police officer), she and a friend (Moir, the wife of Frank, the electrician) confronted me directly, threatening to “beat the shit” out of me. When I calmly (and rather naively) responded that I did not deal with conflict with physical violence, they simply laughed and continued to threaten me. I eventually went to the office and complained about this escalation of what I had previously seen as just a minor irritation into a serious threat to my safety. The office response was simply that I “should have beat the crap out of her the first time she did anything” and I again said “That is not my style for resolving problems”.

Shortly thereafter, another incident occurred, when Paul Sullivan sent me a clear message of intimidation which I chose to challenge. I was conducting a dual interview (two ride guys at the same time, as I was always having to “fly by the seat of my pants” when it came to interviews, given the scarcity of opportunities¹¹²), out in the open. Paul Sullivan strode over, snatched my list of interview questions out of my hand, merely glanced at it and threw it back at me. He certainly did not take the time to read them, and was clearly annoyed when I said to him “Here, Paul, do you want to read them? I have nothing to hide!”. I was not overly concerned with his

¹¹²About two weeks into the research, I expressed a mild degree of frustration, to Paul Sullivan, regarding the difficulty of pinning the workers down to conduct interviews, due to their ongoing work commitments. He suggested I “take a ride guy along with me on the jumps” which showed me how completely oblivious he was to conditions that made such a suggestion almost ludicrous. All the ride guys are involved with tearing down the rides for nearly 6 hours after the show closes at the last spot. I had no intention of putting my health at risk by hanging around the lot until 5 AM or 6 AM, depriving myself of sleep, in order to grab a ride guy for a passenger. Additionally, neither the ride guy nor I would have felt much like doing an interview after such an exhausting day/night, and the danger of combining driving with interviewing also did not seem to occur to Paul.

behaviour, other than seeing it as quite odd, given that I had been conducting interviews for nearly three months at that point. It was only in retrospect, when I was attempting to make sense of the series of events, that I identified his action as an attempt to assert his power, to both me and the ride guys.

Next, the situation with Shania and Moira eventually reached a crisis point where I felt that my safety was in danger. I went to a bar with a group of carnies where I was confronted by Rick (friend of Paul's) who told me I "knew too much" and threatened me with physical harm. Two nights later, I was robbed in the ticket box which I found very frightening, and which I was sure was set up by this small group that was headed by the ticket seller whom I had unintentionally "dethroned".

At the next spot, the situation escalated further, where I was being glared at by Shania and Moira, who muttered non-too-veiled threats of bodily harm at me. The following is my accounting of this particular stage of the intimidation and threatened violence:

Now, I keep hearing that at the end of the season, people get beat up, unresolved stuff gets dealt with by people getting beat up. Now what does this mean for me? Does this mean that I hire a body guard? I'm just going to wait and see and I'm going to play it by ear. I'm going to resist the urge to bolt, take the necessary precautions and try and see it through to the end. I want to see what happens and if I can try and keep this sociological approach, keep distanced from it, as much as I can, and try and just be more analytical, try and stay out of it personally, not take it personally, interpret it sociologically, interpret it as a power struggle. Then I think it's going to be some very interesting stuff. Because what I was thinking was in other situations like this, probably a person would just disappear. But it is almost Lord of the Flies. We're locked onto an island here, not completely — I can leave any time I want. But for a lot of people this is a self-created island and they cannot swim the waters to the outside world. I'm just going to try and watch everything from this point of view, and

I think it will keep my sanity and my safety. I will just be on guard, on red alert at all times (Personal Notes 32-18)

Two days later I was directly confronted by Shania and Moira, who called me all sorts of names and warned me that if I did not leave the lot, I would be severely beaten up. Fortunately, this was near the end of the research (only two spots left), so I decided I should leave for my safety (and the terror that I was feeling by now had taken over from the researcher who was desperately trying to remain "sociological"). While I was packing up my belongings, I was approached by Frank himself who uttered more physical threats. He was furious with me because Ron Sullivan had severely reprimanded him for "not keeping his wife in line". I left the lot totally terrorized and then suffered a further trauma three hours later when my car blew a head gasket. Discussions with trusted carnival friends later uncovered the distinct possibility that my car had been sabotaged by Frank, as a form of retaliation, but I had no way of proving it. I was stuck in a small town in southern central British Columbia with no money, so had to borrow money to return to Vancouver and arrange for a re-built motor for my car to be sent up to the town. When I returned a week later to collect my car, and resume the research at the last spot (which I felt was crucial to the whole project), the car's motor blew again, as the rebuilt motor was defective. Once again, I found myself on the side of a rural road sobbing. Fortunately, I was picked up by two men who had been picking mushrooms in Nakusp and was taken to a small town in the Okanagan where some (non-carnival) friends collected me.

The town was within close driving distance to the last spot where the carnival

was playing, so I was able to spend the last five days of the carnival season observing and interviewing. However, one of the dethroned ticket seller's friends (Shania had been fired after the blow-up) started following me whenever I left the lot, so I learned various techniques of deception to avoid him, in order that my friend's car, which I had borrowed, would not suffer the same fate that my car had.

In retrospect, I realized that there was very little I could have done to avoid this harrowing experience, other than to engage in a relationship with an appropriately powerful male carnival worker, someone with prestige sufficient to act as my "protector"¹¹³.

The entire experience cast a very dark cloud over what had been a mostly delightful, if often difficult, research experience. But I certainly was reminded that the fear of being physically hurt is extremely effective and I understood very clearly how the mere hint of being physically harmed can be a highly effective form of social control, one that was used in a variety of forms in Sullivan Amusements.

Violence and Race

Regarding the race of those involved in the various forms of violence in Sullivan Amusements, I did not notice any racialized elements regarding who were more or less likely to receive punishments, other than the fact that those in power (mainly the royalty) who made any decisions to mete out physical punishments were

¹¹³Earlier in the research, Rachel had told me that when she was promoted from working in the money games to working in the office, Frank's wife was furious, and threatened to beat her up. She merely told the woman that Paul Sullivan (Rachel's boyfriend) would retaliate by firing Frank which ended any escalation of conflict. Rachel reinforced her power over Frank's wife by barring her from entering the office from that point forward.

White. The victims of the various types of punishments were as likely to be White as non-White which was more a consequence of the pre-existing power relations than a process of racialization.

Regarding the Beating Crews, due to the dominance of White men in the joint lines, all the beatings conducted on joint liners were by White men on other White men. However, one area that I did notice a racialized dimension concerned the ride guy Beating Crews. Despite the disproportionately large number of Aboriginal/Metis ride guys, the ride guy Beating Crews were made up almost totally of White men, with usually only one Aboriginal or Metis male involved in the beatings.

I found no conclusive explanation for this, as I had to be very careful in my investigations of the beatings, due to their sensitive and mostly invisible nature: I was very aware that if I made too many inquiries, I might also receive a visit from a nocturnal crew. However, reflecting on the men in the established and voluntary Beating Crew, I realized that they were also some of the most extreme cocaine users in Sullivan Amusements, and were, for the most part, often feared as individuals aside from their membership in the Beating Crews. Many sources told me that most of the bar fights with locals were caused by the White Beating Crew men, who would grow increasingly violent and volatile the more they drank. Another factor common to them was their reputation as financially untrustworthy, meaning that they owed large sums of money to many of their carnival peers, having extracted loans for beer, cigarettes and drugs. Normally, such infractions against the informal carnival rules would result in ostracization, physical violence and,

ultimately, complete rejection from the carnival itself. However, because of their reputations as tough and dirty fighters, they were able to maintain their status.

In addition to their Beating Crew 'duties', their services as enforcers were used by other, less pugilistic men to exact revenge in interpersonal disputes. This mercenary aspect of their fighting expertise provided them with an avenue to acquire benefits in the way of drugs and alcohol, and at the same time reinforced their positions as men to be feared.

While most of the Aboriginal and Metis men also had cocaine and alcohol habits, they rarely became involved in such transactions of reciprocity, preferring to fight their own battles personally. As well, because most of the Aboriginal and Metis ride guys were carnival veterans, they had no need to curry favour by 'lending out' their skills at pugilism, which may explain why they were not as likely to be coerced into conducting beatings. As a result, it could be the case that many of the Aboriginal/Metis men were not forced into conducting any beatings against their will, for fear that they might quit the show, given the overall disapproval of the night-time beatings by most of the carnival workers.

Conclusion

I have shown how violence was used in Sullivan Amusements to negotiate, perpetuate and extract relations of power, prestige and respect. The "royalty" used violence as a way of punishing workers for bringing unwanted attention to the carnival, or for depriving the carnival owners monetarily, taking full advantage of the norm of physical violence inherent in groups of people practicing protest masculinity. Among the (mostly) male workers, physical violence was the conduit through which

relations of power and prestige were also worked out, ensuring that the unwritten hierarchy of power and prestige was maintained, albeit with fragility. As Connell (1995) states:

Violence is part of a system of domination, but is at the same time a measure of its imperfection. A thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate (Connell 1995:84).

A theme that constantly jumped out at me during my time with Sullivan Amusements was the inability or unwillingness on the part of the carnival administrators to admit, or realize, that the very system that they were constantly trying to control with force was created by them. The so-called 'dogs' that were considered to be slovenly, stupid and in perpetual need of whipping into shape were people who were the products of work and social conditions that created and depended upon workers who embraced and accepted a system of domination characterized by punitive and violent measures. The only people willing to tolerate such incredibly difficult circumstances were those with a background in experiences of violence and hardship. The horrendous work and living conditions merely perpetuated their belief that life had to be negotiated along violent terms.

I found a very different carnival culture, regarding violence and employee control, in the large American carnival that I observed in North Dakota. Upon entering the lot, I was immediately struck by the upbeat and healthy demeanor of the workers, and their clean and spacious living quarters -- large bunkhouses with full amenities. They all appeared to be clean, well-groomed, and extremely healthy, with none of the stooped shoulders, unkempt hair and filthy attire that was the normal condition of Sullivan Amusements personnel.

The American carnival lot superintendent whom I interviewed told me that they had zero tolerance for violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. He made the following comments when I asked him some general questions about the carnival personnel:

I've gotta screen a lot of guys and if we find out some guy is wanted by the police I'm the first guy to go and turn him over to the police. See, carnivals have had a bad enough reputation in the past 50, 75 years. You know, you come into town and rape, pillage and plunder. It's a bad image for a carnival, and it's something we've been trying to get rid of for years around here. And so today we had a couple of guys get into a fight last night with other employees, and we turned them over to the police. We don't want to hire anybody like that, you know. If you break the law, we make sure you're punished, and the guys know that around here. If you break the law around this show right here, whatever, we will take you to the police ourselves. They don't have to come looking for you. Back years ago, people used to get beat up in the carnival if they didn't want to work, or do something else wrong, but that never happens any more. Again, basically it's against the law to do it and it doesn't accomplish a damn thing. It makes for bad headlines and we gotta have an image where we don't have bad press. We got reprimands. Say you came on to work for us today, we'd give you a list of rules and fighting is one of the rules. If you break the rules, we're gonna reprimand you. We'll either fire you or take \$10 off your pay or we'll find something for you to do that's outside of your job, like picking up garbage, digging ditches, or something, a punishment, 'cause we don't tolerate fighting out here. We've been trying and doing a really good job of policing ourselves. Most of the major carnivals have been doing a great job. The help don't get beat up anymore, kicked around. It happened 25 years ago, I'm sorry to say that it did, but it doesn't happen anymore. You hear about the smaller shows, the little Mom and Pop operations, in the south, where that kind of stuff still goes on, but the big carnivals, the big shows are all trying to make this industry something to be proud of, you know. The carnival is an American tradition. People don't want to come out to a show where they heard about on television where some guy got his head knocked in 'cause he didn't feel like running his ride this morning. We do something as a punishment for breaking the rules by fighting the first time. The second time we just fire them. If they use a weapon in a

fight the first time, we fire them, and even if just two guys get out of hand, push each other, they get reprimanded (Marcus 88).

The use of violence in Sullivan Amusements certainly appears to have been used historically in carnivals, but the more modernized ones, like the one referred to above, have obviously seen the futility in using physical beatings to control their work force.

In Chapter Ten I examine some of the social activities engaged in by Sullivan Amusements, practices that went far in alleviating many of the more negative experiences of the carnival described in this chapter.



Joint bum



Joint Supervisor (L) and Joint Bum (R)

Chapter 9

Razzle Games, Agents and Cooling Out the Beef: Gender, Race and Skill in Non-Manual Carnival Labour

Anybody who comes to the carnival, I believe, should spend their money, anything that they have in their pockets. Otherwise, why the hell are you at the carnival? If you're going to come to walk around and look at the animals in the cages [meaning joint bums], go to a fuckin' circus! I don't want to see you! As far as I'm concerned, the carnival is like legal drug dealing. All you have to do is show that your product is cheaper than buddy's next door without letting them get a chance to see what buddy's is actually like. If they're walking by on the midway in front of your joint, they want a stuffed animal. You just have to show them that they want it (Cece 34-19)

Introduction

A curious gap in most of the literature on working-class masculinities is the absence of discussions on the value placed on particular non-manual skills: mental labour that requires a specific type of tacit knowledge to be successful. The preponderance of masculinities literature emphasizes, quite accurately, the high value placed on manual labour in male working-class work domains, which grows out of the centrality of the body as a tool and as a location where 'manliness' is expressed in physical form.

Once again, the habit of most working class social researchers to focus only on legitimate working-class environments for their research ignores the variety of work that working-class men do, some of which can be found outside the realm of legitimate or mainstream labour, and which involve high degrees of mental skill. Many male criminals, for example, engage in lucrative activities that are entirely dependent on well-honed mental skills (often backed up, of course, by the threat of physical violence). The carnival is also a domain where highly developed mental

skills are used for monetary gain. Interestingly, however, much of the description of the skills by the joint bums themselves is couched in physical terms, such as "hitting the mooch", or "kicking out a piece", indicating the linkage between images of manual activities that are tied up in the language and the mental abilities needed to achieve success. In this chapter, I will examine the various skills and ethics needed to be a successful joint bum and the gendered, racialized and classed nature thereof.

Description of the Joints

A full description of all the joints in their entirety would require a separate thesis. Instead, I shall present some general categories of joints, focusing on several characteristics: *how* the mooch was able to win; *whether* the mooch was able to win; and the legitimacy/illegitimacy of the game.

In terms of legitimacy, it would be fair to state that nearly all of the games were, in various ways, illegal, and were known in the carnival as gaff games. Gaff, then, is not a particular type of game but the condition of whether or not the game is capable of being rigged, either by altering a physical feature of the game or by the use of certain verbal skills by the joint bum. Almost synonymous with gaff is a "flat store": "running a game flat" means to not give out any stock (prizes). "Alibis" is yet another term for any joint that is run flat. An alibi store is any game joint where the joint bum makes excuses to the mooch so that he or she does not have to "kick out" (give out) a prize. This was accomplished by various techniques, most of which centered on the customer allegedly having made a mistake, such as stepping over a line, or leaning too far over the joint's counter. The following is a description given

to me by one of the joint bums of an alibi joint:

How it works is, in the bushel joint, it's baskets, and they have one basket that he has rigged, that the ball doesn't bounce out of. Now, first he sets it so when the person first throws it in, it lands. When he pulls the ball out, he rubs it across one of the lines, pulls it back, and sets it to spring, so the next ball that goes in, bounces back out. They cut one of the slats on the basket so it slides back and forth, and when the slide isn't in place, it doesn't bounce. Now they call a bushel joint an alibi joint, 'cause you can alibi a person in it, like "oh, it hit the rim" or "your hand came over the line". (Peter 20).

Another slang term for the games was "traps" or "trap joint", meaning that once the joint worker snagged the mooch, there was almost no way for the mooch to leave with wallet unemptied. Roy, an accomplished joint bum, offered a good description of a trap:

It's a trap because it is simply a canvas tent, and you walk in and you spend money. I'm not giving you anything. What am I giving you? I may be giving you a teddy bear, or a little bit of a pot of money. Perhaps in a strict financial sense you could say that I'm providing a service, fair enough, but I consider it a trap, because any person with half a brain would not walk in and drop \$150 or \$200 on a teddy bar. I think every game joint out here is a trap. Yeah, it's a trap, and when you come in there, I'm the trap manager (Roy 13).

The carnival rhetoric, or official party line, was that none of the games were gaffed or flat at Sullivan Amusements. But as I delved deeper into the carnival culture and gained more and more trust from the joint workers, I learned that, with the exception of some of the "balloon stores" (pop a balloon and win a stuffie) almost all the games were gaffed or flat in various degrees.

A. The Money Games

Essentially gambling games, this category of games was one of the oldest

(and most illegal) in the carnival. Some required very little skill from either the joint bum or the mooch. The Under Seven/Over Seven game, for example, was simply a game of chance, where a wheel was spun or a dice thrown to try and arrive at a particular number. These were easily gaffed by having weighted dice or wheels that would simply never stop on a winning number. Other types of money games were impossible to win, such as those where the customer had to throw dice and arrive at a number total that simply did not exist on a game board. These were known as “razzle games” where the joint workers’ skills were essentially highly developed sales skills — being able to call in the mooch and keep him (they usually targeted males) there emptying out his wallet in the hopes of winning a big prize. The money taken by the people who ran these flatties (as they were also known as) was enormous: One joint line supervisor told me that each operator was able to take around \$5000 off only one customer, and that he had personally seen one of Sullivan’s flat store operators take \$15,000 from a mooch (20-11).

B. Build-Em-Up Games

Also known as “Trade-Em-Ups” and “Hanky Panks”, these games also required no great skill on the part of the mooch. In the case of balloon stores, the customer only had to throw a dart at a balloon. But the objective of the joint bum was to convince the mooch that if he or she kept throwing a dart, then the mooch could turn in whatever prize they won for larger and larger prizes, forking out more money with each attempt, hence the term “build-em-up”. As one joint bum said “There’s an understanding that you try to develop with the customer that the only way that they’re going to achieve success, which is to get a larger piece [prize], is to

play again and continue and trade up, trade in" (Roy 11). Many of the trailer games were build-em-ups: games like squirting water into a clown's mouth, or horse-racing games¹¹⁴.

C. One-Shots or One-Balls

These were at the lowest end of the scale in terms of money-making, from the joint bums' perspectives. They were games where the mooch simply paid the same money each time for an attempt to knock over a bottle, or throw a ring over a wooden stick. Most of the one-shots were run as alibis or flat stores, as the objective of the joint bum was to hand over as little stock (prizes) as possible.

Social Class and Game Joints

There were three criteria that signified the prestige of joint bums: which *joint line* they worked on, which particular *game* they worked on, and how much *money* they made. The highest level of prestige was held by those who ran the money games, particularly the flatties or razzle games. Most of these games were run by elderly men who had been close friends of Ron Sullivan for years. He flew them in from all over North America, paid for their hotel rooms and meals, and generally treated them like visiting V.I.P.'s. They only set up their joints at certain spots,

¹¹⁴These latter two games could also be gaffed, as I found out with first-hand experience in the fall of 1999 when I went to the Pacific National Exhibition to visit some of my carny friends. I was chatting with a joint bum at a squirt gun game, and he was expressing frustration at not getting many customers. Games like these require several customers playing at the same time. I told him I would help his cause by playing, along with my son. Sure enough, other people began to sit down. I was "rewarded" by winning the game (and receiving a medium-sized teddy bear). My son and I decided to play again and, amazingly, I won a second time. This time, with great theatricality, the joint bum motioned for me to step back about five feet from his joint and, with a grand gesture, he threw an even larger teddy bear out to me, winking as he did so.

where the "heat" was less likely to appear, given the illegality of the games. They never stayed open all evening, only long enough to make huge sums of money¹¹⁵ (another marker of prestige). Overall, they kept a very low profile. Butch (who lent out his credit card to the hotel room-trashing joint bum duo and then beat one of them) was their protector: one of his most important jobs was to look out for people who might be standing and watching the games, trying to figure out how they were run. He would get rid of the observers by physically bashing them with his body, grabbing them by an elbow, and escorting them off the lot. Numerous people told me that these games, their operators and the knowledge that they held were rapidly disappearing from carnivals in North America. In fact, they are almost completely gone in the United States, due to their illegality. Paul and Ron Sullivan were the only people in Sullivan Amusements, besides "Sullivan's old farts" (as they were known as), who knew how to run these games (with the exception of one younger agent who was promoted to running them). Paul told me he had no intention of

¹¹⁵Peter, a joint bum, described one of their games, the money generated and the outcome: "It's a game of numbers. They've got one of those weird dice, and it's got a bunch of numbers on it, and they've got a scorecard. They set a number as to what you've gotta hit and it doesn't matter how many times you try with that dice, no way the numbers are going to add up to that number. So it's a scam to start with, but the customer doesn't know that. And they say, OK, do it for twenty bucks, see what happens. Ok, you got twenty in there, sir, now double it, all you need to do is hit it two more times. And the guy throws it, and then he goes, oh, sorry, sir, you missed it by one, but double the pot, match what's in the pot, and I'll let you go again. Those guys take people out for \$500, \$600 a pop. In one spot, where they had a guy they whacked out for \$1200, well, I guess he was a big wheeler there, so all his buddies, mammoth guys, come back to beat the daylight out of Hank [the agent], 'cause he took all his cash. There was twelve of these guys showed up and they made him give all the money back. These guys had guns and everything and they didn't want a big scrap. But that's why they call it a razzle game" (Peter 7). In order to avoid such confrontations, the agents of these razzle games tended to immediately 'close up shop' as soon as they took a large sum of money off a mooch.

teaching others the skills, in his attempts to clean up the carnival as he continues to take on more and more control over the operation from his father.

Next in terms of prestige were the so-called “agents”, also known as “concessionaires”. They were deemed to be “qualified”, which meant having a proven record of being able to make money. Agents were always adamant in distinguishing themselves from joint bums, and prided themselves on their ability to make money. What separated them from the general category of joint bums was their longevity. They had been “in the game” for many, many years, usually with the same boss and the same game, and perceived themselves as highly professional at their jobs. They enjoyed more perks (e.g. better accommodations) than the joint bums as the joint line owners’ financial success was dependent upon the agents’ abilities. Most of the trailer games were run by agents, as were the games in the highest level joint line.

At the lowest class level dwelt the joint bums, mostly itinerant workers with very little skill or experience in running the games. I learned that the term “joint bum” is derived from the historical practice of transience, where the workers would jump from show to show, and from game to game over the season. I was told that the reason carnivals have the unwritten rule that the joint owners literally own their joint bums (thereby having the option of lending them out to other joints, and barring them from being hired by another joint owner) was to try to offset or at least contain the rapid turnover in joint bums. In Sullivan Amusements, the majority of joint line workers would be classified as joint bums. They certainly comprised what was considered to be a pool of unskilled labour, and occupied the lowest level of prestige

in the entire carnival hierarchy.

Joints, Gender and Morality

Working behind the joints was considered to be a male-gendered occupation, requiring a skill that only a male was seen to possess: aggression. I knew of only one female agent that worked in Sullivan Amusements, and she was a woman who displayed protest masculinist qualities of supreme toughness and a disregard for any ethical concerns about extracting large sums of money from mooches. She had a reputation for making lots of money in her joint and, in fact, inspired both fear and admiration in most of the other workers¹¹⁶.

The quality of aggression which was perceived to be lacking in most female joint workers was tied up with the issue of morality. Success, which to a joint bum meant the ability to make money, was predicated on the degree to which the worker could rationalize taking money away from a customer, an act which was considered

¹¹⁶I had an unfortunate run-in with her, where she threatened to beat me up. When Rachel and Paul and I were roaming around the large American carnival in Saskatchewan, I took a photograph of Rachel chatting to this woman, whom I did not know at that point. (Her joint line had "jumped into" this carnival just for the Saskatchewan spot, a common practice.) At the Pie Car party (see Chapter 10), I spotted her and happened to have a copy of the photograph with me, so I gave her a copy. She lunged at me, demanding to know where the photo came from, and when I told her I had taken it, she yelled at me that I had no right to take her photo without her permission. I said "Look, I was taking Rachel's photo, not yours. You just happen to be in the photo. You work in a public place; therefore, anybody can take your photo". She then demanded the negative, which I did not have, as I had already sent them back to my home. She continued to threaten me with bodily harm if I did not give her the negative. I stood my ground, saying that I would be glad to mail her the negative upon my return, if she could give me an address, and that even if she beat me up, I still couldn't produce the negative til later. She refused to give me an address and threatened me that if I ever used her name in any publication, she would find me and beat me up. She finally stopped bellowing at me, and strode away. The carnival workers who had watched this exchange with awe applauded me for standing up to her, many of them saying that it was not often that someone got away from a skirmish with her unharmed.

nothing short of perfectly acceptable robbery by the joint workers. The main rationale for emptying mooches' wallets was that if customers were stupid enough to even enter the midway joint line, then they were fair game (no pun intended) for all joint workers.

Three significant patterns emerged in my discussions with male and female joint line workers regarding gender and ethics (the two appeared to be inseparable in any talks I had with joint workers). The first theme was that the male joint workers (including owners and supervisors) unanimously claimed that they did not like to work with women because the female workers got all the customers: women were seen by the mooches as less intimidating. On the other hand, women were considered unable to make much money out of the customers, over the long term. One joint line supervisor told me that women who worked in the joints were either "sluts or blanks [meaning: very unintelligent]" (20-10). The following is a conversation I had with another joint line supervisor:

Fiona: Joint workers and gender. Do you find any difference in males and females? Do you prefer hiring males or females?

Cece: OK. This is going to sound sexist. Don't take offence. I would prefer females in my joints. Females will make more money in the beginning than men. Especially if they're cute. Even, I've noticed, the ugly ones do. Fat, ugly, very hard on the eyes, but they'll still make money.

Fiona: Why?

Cece: Parents trust a woman more. However, in the long run, men make the better agents.

Fiona: Because?

Cece: We have to work beside women. The first girl that I ever worked beside, my first boss, manager, was a girl, about 5'6", kind of frumpy, kind of fat, but 44D breasts, huge! And all she did was she'd stand there and the guys would throw darts and she'd jump up and down. The guys would just stand there, no shit, and just throw darts. Here, you want some money? Here,

have some money. [Cece puts on a blank stare, with his head going up and down, as if he is watching the woman's chest bouncing up and down.] Oh, I won something? Cool. Here's some more money. I'll throw some more darts. And to compete against that, you have to be good. So men in the long run will become better than women (34-17).

The paradox, then, was that although women were considered magnets for male customers as sex objects, they were rarely seen to possess the skills to be successful joint workers on any other terms. But, as Cece points out above, the successes of female joint bums did compel the male workers to hone their supposedly innate aggressive skills in order to stay competitive.

The second theme that emerged evolved out of the female workers' experiences in the joints. All of the female joint liners that I spoke to complained bitterly about two forms of treatment that they received from the male joint workers and supervisors. They referred to the intense competition among joint bums, and the practice of male joint liners taking customers away from them quite aggressively. In many of the joints there were two or three joint bums, who worked in competition with one another. In theory, there were invisible lines drawn around each joint bum's particular areas. In other words, once a mooch got inside a joint bum's particular range, the mooch became the property of that joint bum. All the women complained that the male workers trespassed on their space, reaching over and grabbing mooches (sometimes physically). In order to survive, the female workers had to become extremely aggressive themselves. Teresa, a joint worker in one of the balloon stores that had three joint workers, said the following:

The best people [agents] are usually on the outside, because they get first grabs at people coming either way, and the new

ones get the center. Like I was in the center for a long, long time, until I learned what to do. Which was get the mooch. Like you have a chance to get that person til they're half-way in between you and then it's the next person's turn, if you don't get them. And if you're in the middle, you don't have a whole lot of time to grab them. So like I stick my hand out of the joint. I do my part and then if they don't take it, well, that's it. It depends on what you say, too, like the other person hasn't said that, you know, they haven't had a chance to say it, you know, like they're blowing up a balloon and you actually might be the first one they actually get to. I think they [the male joint workers] try to be intimidating but if you let them know that you're not going to back down, they usually back off. They'd do things like burst all your balloons and stuff like that. [Her male joint partner] used to do that to me all the time until suddenly I turned around and I stuck a dart in his stomach! I drew blood. And that was the end of it. Like, don't push me. I got their respect after that (Teresa 39-4/5).

The second complaint from female joint workers was similar to Teresa's tale of wresting control and customers away from her co-workers: treatment by the joint supervisors and owners (all male). The people with the least amount of power and prestige in the carnival were female joint bums, especially those who worked in the one-balls. All the joint owners preferred to hire males, and females who were hired (usually via an attachment with another male carnival worker) were treated very badly by the owners and often did not stay long. The joint supervisors yelled abusively at them constantly (which I often overheard), telling to stop being so lazy and make some money. Most of the female joint bums came from extremely abusive backgrounds, and would cower when being chastised by their male supervisors and co-workers. Liza, the only Aboriginal female carnival worker who worked as a joint bum, used to work as a prostitute, and had been married twice, both times to violent White males. A former alcoholic and drug addict, she had met Kyle, a valued White male joint bum, at a rehab centre and related how she entered

the carnival and what her first impressions of it were:

Kyle went to [joint owner] and said, my girlfriend's here, can you give her a job. Neither one of them really wanted me to get hired. It was very embarrassing. I had no self-esteem. I wasn't given any instructions, just "money to be made here", "money to be made". Kyle and I slept on the front seat of [joint owner's] truck for the first part of the season. I hated how all the joint foremen treated me like shit. They didn't like what I did. The guys treated all of us women like shit, telling us we don't know how to do things, saying stuff like "I don't know why you're on the crew, you're just a waste of time". Sometimes I wouldn't even do stuff. I'd say to hell with it, you do it yourself if you don't like the way I do it, and Kyle would come running to my rescue all the time, thank God. He stuck up for me. I just about got smacked by [joint supervisor] one time. I turned around and yelled at him "I'm old enough to be your mother. Don't you dare talk to me like that" and he went to raise his arm and I said "Go ahead and do it" and he just walked away and it was this close. I hated all of it. I wasn't impressed by not knowing where I was going to pee from one minute to the next, or shower. I got pneumonia last year and I didn't have any blankets or pillows (Liza 21-17/18).

Liza was one of the more assertive female joint line workers, and had the advantage of being associated with an extremely valued male joint worker. For those whose relationships with boyfriends had ended, however, the treatment received was much more abusive. Many told me they desperately wanted to quit, but they had no money (and were "into" their bosses for large amounts) and nowhere to go. A large number of the female joint workers were very young (14 - 17 years) and rumoured to be runaways, which rendered them even more vulnerable to the cruel treatment by their supervisors.

The third pattern that developed out of observations and conversations with joint workers was, again, sexual in nature. The male joint workers considered one of the perks of the job to be the opportunity to "pick up" female customers. Even

when female customers were accompanied by a male partner, the male joint workers flirted with females. Many expressed the need to maintain a fine balance between “coming on” to the females while not alienating their male partners. The motive behind the flirtation with women who were partnered with males was that, although it was the general view that it was the male customers who had the money, acquisition of that money was almost guaranteed if they could hook in the female first. Once the female’s attention was caught, then the males would begin a verbal patter that centered around coercing the male to spend money on his girlfriend — to impress her by winning her a teddy bear or other stuffed animal.

Competition among the male joint bums over who could “get more girls” was also commonplace. A former joint bum related the following when I asked him to tell me about some of his experiences in the joints:

It was fun. I got to meet a lot of women, a lot of girls. We used to have a competition between the joint guys and the ride guys as to who could get more girls during the place and stuff like that. For me all it meant was being friends with them and going on rides with them, but I rarely ever slept around with any of the locals. A lot of the joint bums slept with the locals, ‘cause being in a joint you have more opportunity to flirt around with girls and they just keep walking by and you start flirting with them, and they stick around. And if you get the women coming in, then sometimes you’ll get the guys or the boyfriends there with them and then you kind of goad the boyfriends into winning their girl a prize, so it’s a way of making money (Dennis 67).

Gender, then, worked in a variety of ways to create relationships of oppression (for the female joint bums) and dominance, for the male joint bums. Despite working under very difficult conditions, all the joint bums were able to make sense of their jobs and find pleasure in using their sexuality to lure in customers of the opposite sex, again reflecting the norm of heterosexuality that pervaded the carnival. Two of

the female joint bums were known to be bisexual, but I was unaware of any attempts by them to lure in customers of the same sex. They were told by the joint line supervisors to use their femininity to attract only male customers.

Closely connected to the uses of sexuality to attract customers was the issue of morality which, as I have already stated, was a phenomenon raised much more often by the female joint workers than the males. Teresa, for example, who was a first-time joint bum in the season that I was with Sullivan Amusements, explained the initial ethical dilemma that she faced:

See, I couldn't do very well in the beginning, 'cause I thought I was cheating people all the time. Like, they can't afford five dollars, or they can't afford that, you know, but I learned the hard way, because that person would go to the next person who would be [her two co-workers] and they would make them spend money. That was the trick. They wouldn't have spent it if they didn't want to spend it anyway. It took me a good two or three months to really get over it (Teresa 3/4).

Male joint bums and supervisors, however, were far less likely to experience any moral angst over taking money from mooches. They posited that it was completely impossible to make any money if there were any qualms whatsoever about ethics. Albert, a joint line supervisor who occasionally worked one of the trailer games, responded with the following when I asked him his opinion of my findings that if a joint worker had too many morals, they would not be successful:

Yeah, that is true. It's very valid, 'cause if you feel that you're ripping somebody off, and you don't like that, and you're straightforward honest, then you won't make it out here because it's not that you're ripping off anybody. It's just done in a different manner. It's no different than walking into a store and buying something. The store owner buys it at a cheaper price and sells it to you, but you don't go in there and say, hey, man, that's too much. You go in and get your product and pay for it. And

they come to the carnival, and it's different. They feel that they can argue about it, but it's no different than walking into a store. But if you have very high standards or morals, then, no, you won't make it because a lot of people feel that they're getting ripped off and if you can't get over that part of it, then you won't make it (Albert 9).

It seemed that for female joint workers to get past the ethical dilemma, they had to interpret their situation in terms of gaining at least an equal level of competitive ability with their male counterparts which did not completely erase any moral concerns, but did seem to allow them to set their concerns aside. But for men, moral concerns were rationalized to the point of extinction by making comparisons with other sorts of business transactions where it was simply up to the customer whether they chose to buy the product or not.

There were limits, however, to taking money off customers, with the same underlying motive as other unacceptable forms of carnival behaviour: "cooling the beef", or keeping the heat (police, parents or other figures of authority) away from the carnival. The general rule was that young children, especially if not accompanied by an adult, and mentally-challenged people were not to be "hit as hard" or "taken" (both terms refer to the relentless goal of emptying a mooch's wallet). I was told by a joint bum of an incident where an agent took a mentally-challenged girl for over \$100 and all she won was a small teddy bear. The joint owner found out about it as the agent boasted loudly about his conquest. The joint owner found the child, returned her \$100 and gave her a larger teddy bear as compensation. However, the motive was not altruistic: the concern was that someone would complain to the carnival, thereby bringing unwanted attention.

Albert, the joint supervisor, explains further:

There have been a few times where kids have shown up at the fair. Mom and Dad's given them twenty bucks and said, go to the fair. And they come home half an hour later with a little teddy bear and, hey, Mom and Dad go through the roof and they come back down saying, what did you do? You took all his money just 'cause he's a poor defenseless kid. It does happen. And that's why on our crew we tell all our workers you don't do that. We don't need the hassles. Depending on how much they complain, most of the time they usually get the teddy bear of their choice. The child gets back all his money and then if it has to go further, they might get a few ride passes and stuff, whatever it takes to make a parent feel happy again and that the child didn't get ripped off. And then the employee kind of gets reprimanded a bit, depending on how mad the parent is again. If the parent wants the guy fired, then sometimes it does happen, the guy will get fired for doing it (Albert 10).

The skill of getting away with ripping off people (no matter what their age or special needs status might have been) was, however, a highly valued commodity in the carnival. Again, the credo of "It's only bad if you get caught" prevailed. Jesse, the joint bum who did not get fired for trashing the hotel room because of his well-known ability to make money in the joints, was in fact promoted by Ron Sullivan to run some of the flatties, based purely on his ability to "cool out the beef". Peter, a joint bum, explains Jesse's promotion:

We were doing this exhibition, and Jesse took a kid, 12 or 13, had his own paper route, and had his own lawn mowing company, had major bucks, and he took the kid for \$530. And the kid walked out with two big \$30 pieces, that's it. Now, he had taken him for more than the \$530 but he had to kick back so much so the kid wouldn't beef. He kicked back \$200 to the kid, so he actually took over \$700. See, for Jesse, if you opened your wallet, that was his objective to get the person to open their wallet so he could see how much cash they had in there. That's why he got into doing the flat stores. Sullivan seen him running that bushel joint and saw that he rarely got a beef, so he put him in the flatties (Peter 20/21).

Skills in the Joints

At the most fundamental level, the skills that were needed to work successfully in the joints could be characterized as no different than those in any retail sales occupation: the ability to sell a customer a product. The difference, however, between an orthodox retail store operation and the game joints was that customers at a carnival do not necessarily roam the joint line looking to make a purchase. As well, there is no fixed price on the merchandise, and buying anything from a joint required some degree of gambling on the part of the mooch. In other words, the transactions were complex, arbitrary and highly dependent on the interpersonal relationships between the mooches and the joint bums.

The first skill then was to "call in the mooch", and to decide who that mooch might be. Joint bums were quite calculating in their decision of who to try to 'entrap', but when pressed to give a general description, many had difficulty actually putting it into words. Most of them said "You just know" when I asked them. Others, though, were able to give more information on the criteria of what was known as a "live one", "live" meaning looking as if the mooch had money and was likely to spend it (with perhaps some convincing from the joint bum). A live one was not necessarily male or female, but young, well-dressed males were often targeted as being live, as were mothers with young children. Albert describes how a live one might be identified:

It's kind of hard to explain. The term they call it is "live" — someone looks live. Somebody who looks like it doesn't matter to them that they spend the money, just as long as they have fun doing it, they get a prize, and they're happy. A lot of times it just comes, right? The girl wants the teddy bear and the guy wants to show he's macho and win the teddy bear for her. So that would be somebody who's live, who wants to do it just because he's got the date. And that's

how you would try to figure out, will he go for something big or is he just going to be a five dollar player or something that lasts longer. So you gotta try and figure that out within 30 seconds to a minute. As soon as you first see him that's about as much time as you have, as you're calling him in, to make a quick appraisal to see whether or not it's worth trying to call him in. People who just give you a real dirty look or somebody who might tell you to eff off and so on, you don't bother with. It all depends on the reaction you're getting from the first words you say to them that would determine whether or not they're even interested or not (Albert 8/9).

Whether a customer was characterized as "live" also depended on the game itself: many games appeal to specific groups of people, as Cece, a nine-year veteran in the joints, explains below:

Anybody can make money off anybody. Now there are certain games that only take money off certain people. Last night I hit a kid, well, he wasn't a kid, he was about 19 years old. I hit him fairly hard in one of my games, the squirt guns. Now I wouldn't have been able to get him in the balloons, but I could hit him in the squirt guns. That game appeals to that age group, the teenagers, young kids, guns, shooting things (Cece 6).

After getting the mooch's attention, the next skill required by joint bums was the ability to keep the customer playing and spending money -- in other words, "hitting them hard" to use Cece's phrase above. The more experienced the joint bum, the more developed these skills were. It was tantamount to a high-pressure sales job, convincing the customer that if they tried just one more time, they would win the big prize. Skilled joint bums were able to sustain these transactions for long periods of time, gradually taking more and more money from the mooches, using alibis if necessary, as Peter reveals in his explanation of some of Jesse's successes in the joints:

Jesse had what he called his ten-point system. He'll get them where they have to get three balls go in, in the bushel joint.

He'll get them to put up a five dollar game to begin with. They'll get three in and he says, well, OK sir, you match that pot and there's five bucks in there, so put up another five bucks and we'll just carry on. We won't count that miss. Boom. They get another two in, and they miss. Oh, that's alright sir. We'll do the same thing. You match what's in the pot. So now there's ten bucks in, so they have to put another ten bucks up. Boom. They get another one in, and then they miss again, so they're up to 8 points. They need two more points so he goes, OK, match the pot again, so there's twenty in there and so goes up to forty bucks. OK, sir, go ahead. He misses. Well, go ahead, sir, match what's in the pot, so now it's up to 80 bucks. So the guy gets one in and Jesse goes, OK, sir, now you've only got one more to get, one more. He throws, he misses. That's OK sir, match what's in the pot and I'll give you another throw. So now it's up to \$160. So now he says to you, well, sir, if you get this one in, you win the money that's in the pot plus whatever prize you want in here. So they keep trying, and they miss, or he alibis them if they do get it in, "Oh, it hit the rim, sir. Here's a free one. Try it again, go ahead" (Peter 20).

Joint bums who were adept at their craft had no ethical concerns about duping customers, a skill that one could argue grows out of the protest masculine practice of manipulation of those deemed to be of low value. In the case of the joint bums, their characterization of customers as stupid and willing to part with their money provided the justification for dispensing with any ethical concerns.

The other trait of protest masculinity that describes the superior interpersonal skills necessary to be a successful joint bum is the "spectacular display, embracing the marginality and stigma and turning them to account" (Connell 1995:116). Joint bums were fully aware of the customers' dislike and suspicion of them. They responded by mocking the customers' derision, taking great delight in reeling them into their joints, using their finely-honed abilities to check each person out thoroughly and remarkably quickly, to ascertain whether or not they were worth the effort.

Many of the joint bums referred to the theatricality of the job — the idea that it was indeed all a show designed to entertain and entice (embodied in the term “razzle games”). Roy describes the theatrical nature of the games:

Have you seen them at the P.N.E.? I mean, it's a show! And I'm completely aware of that, and I try to motivate the crowd using little tricks that I've picked up, and it's manipulating that crowd's energy into believing in me and believing in the game, and believing that as long as they stay in, they'll make more money. It's all choreographed from start to finish (Roy 13).

Cece also referred to the entertainment aspect of working in the joints:

It's a big show, that's all it is. It's a big put-on, to entertain people, and we're all actors hired for the part. We're on stage. When we're stuck in that joint, we're on stage. We're in the spotlight. We have to be or else people aren't going to give us any money. Yeah, I have to be a happy carnival worker, you know, I don't care what game I work in. But it doesn't matter what game I'm in. I have to fake it. It has to be THE BEST ONE ON THE MIDWAY [Cece yells this out] and I have to exude that with every ounce of my fiber (Cece 18).

I was frequently amazed at the joint bums' ability to carry on a conversation with me while, at the same time, calling in mooches with various forms of banter, delivered with machine-gun-like repetition and force. The joint bums in the trailer games often wore headset microphones and, with a flick of a switch, would bellow out into the midway, hardly skipping a beat, and then resume their conversations with me. Many professed to being totally exhausted from the energy needed to maintain such a high level of verbal delivery that often bordered on the manic. Like the ride guys, joint bums frequently used bennies to endure the long hours and the need to maintain a virtually continuous upbeat chatter, always on stage, trying to pull in the mooch.

The Racialization of Joint Line Work

I noted earlier that joint line workers were predominantly White males, the exceptions being Liza (Aboriginal) and one of her sons (Metis) who joined the show late in the season. I cannot state with any certainty why there were so few Aboriginal or Metis joint line workers, other than to restate my finding that their work preference was the difficult manual labour found on the rides. My sense was that it was two factors that dissuaded them from working in the joints. The first grew out of my casual conversations with the Aboriginal ride guys and their general disgust for the amoral element inherent in joint line work, taking money off mooches. Another dimension of the financial element that was distasteful to the Aboriginal ride guys was that they saw the joint liners as fools for engaging in work that was rewarded with (to them) minuscule wages and ongoing verbal admonitions from the joint line supervisors. But the most significant characteristic of joint line work that they did not like was the lack of physical labour involved. They experienced much more meaning and satisfaction in working hard on their rides, demonstrating that the opportunity to express the elements of protest masculinity and its emphasis on the body was much more worthy of their talents than what they saw as bilking customers through mental manipulations.

Conclusion

The mental skills displayed by the joint bums at Sullivan Amusements were absolutely critical to their financial success, given that they were all, except the joint line supervisors, paid only on commission. I found that, with few exceptions, the males were the most adept at their craft, using their sexuality to initiate transactions

with female customers, but with the end purpose of manipulating the male mooches into spending as much cash as possible.

Ethical concerns appeared to be the main point of division between the male and female joint workers: females were far more likely to express anxiety at taking money from mooches in anything other than straight-forward techniques. They suffered financial losses as a consequence, and therein I found a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy voiced by the male joint bums that females were incapable of being good joint bums. Joint bums, male or female, who did not generate much money were usually relegated to the lowest level joints, those least likely to make much money regardless of the joint bums' skills. This inability to bring in much, therefore, served as evidence for the male joint supervisors to consistently label women as poor joint bums.

In the next chapter, I show further evidence of the highly gendered social structure of Sullivan Amusements, by describing the social activities of the carnival workers, in both informal and formal settings, where the elements of protest masculinity and emphasized femininity were displayed in their most overt forms.



Pie Car party fun and games with whipped cream,
enjoyed by floss chick (L) and ride guy (R)



Sam at the mid-carnival season barbecue

Chapter 10

"We're All Just One Big Happy Family Out Here": Socializing with the Carnies

Although I don't socialize much with the carny folk after work, it doesn't seem to affect my relationships with them, or how they relate to me: still very friendly. There's no resentment or "you think you're better than us" or anything like that. And I've noticed that that's how they really relate to everybody. There's no stigma attached to partying or not partying with them. Of course, I hear it all second-hand from the other ticket sellers and the ride guys, because it's always the talk the next day, like what happened last night, who argued with who, how drunk they got, who barfed where, who had to walk home five miles from the bar, who can't remember anything past midnight (Personal Notes 3-47).

Introduction

In Chapter Four, I argue that what sets Sullivan Amusements apart from other case studies of working-class environments is its fusion of work and social activities. I also argue that one of the answers to my original research questions — why do people voluntarily engage in low-paid labour that is overwhelmingly difficult and embedded in equally harsh work conditions? — was the satisfaction the workers received from the social aspect of the carnival. In other words, the benefits derived from the social cohesion and interrelationships of the group transcended and, in many ways, neutralized the negative characteristics of the jobs and the environment.

Many working-class jobs, especially male-dominated domains where the elements of protest masculinity weave through the work and its practitioners to create and sustain images of masculinity that glorify physical hardship, are further rationalized by the workers as the prerequisite for indulging in equally intense social activities. Put simply, if you work hard, you deserve to play hard. For most of the

carnival workers, especially the ride guys, joint bums, ticket sellers and other low-level workers, playing hard at the end of the night's work translated into heavy drinking, drugging and sexual activity (or at least the pursuit thereof).

In this chapter, I describe the social activities of Sullivan Amusements' personnel which fall into three main categories: (1) Informal gatherings of workers in bars, nightclubs and around/in the carnival trucks; (2) Structured and pre-arranged social gatherings that took place on several occasions during my season with the carnival; and (3) Interpersonal social relations between the carnies and/or locals. I also focus on the gendered, racialized and classed aspects of the socializing, developing further my arguments on emphasized femininity, as it was in the social activities that the elements of emphasized femininity and protest masculinity became most pronounced.

My observations and findings of the unofficial socializing (on and off the carnival lot) are somewhat limited. I only rarely attended the (often) all-night drinking and drugging get-togethers for three reasons. The first was purely personal: I found it difficult enough to endure the long work hours, inclement weather and marathon driving on the jumps. I always prioritized my health over any interesting research possibilities.¹¹⁷ Consequently, I chose only rarely to join the groups after work when they went to bars and clubs because I did not want to become sleep-deprived. The second reason was that I always heard about their adventures the next day, from various sources, which did serve as useful, although

¹¹⁷I was invited to join one of the drivers on a double-back which would have meant essentially two nights without sleep given that I had just driven all night to get to a spot.

second-hand, data. Thirdly, fights often broke out among the male carnies when they were drinking. Many were alcoholics who consumed vast (to me) amounts of beer each night (drinking a six-pack of beer after work was considered 'light' drinking). Having always had an aversion to violence, I did not want to be in a group where fights among the men occurred on a fairly regular basis. I also felt that spending too much time with them in their after-hours activities might compromise my position as researcher.

I did go to bars and clubs with groups of carnies on about eight occasions over the season, and went into the Pie Car for a beer about six times. Ironically, because my 'appearances' were so rare and so many of the ride guys and male joint bums clearly had great affection for me, I was always inundated with attention from the male carnies. I never had the opportunity to buy my own beer as the men would compete with one another to be the one to buy me a beer. Peering through the crowd of males surrounding me, I always noted that some of the younger female carnies, who were being totally ignored by the male carnies while they were engaged in jostling for my attention, would look at me with glances of envy and a tinge of anger. For all these reasons, therefore, I chose to limit my attendance in the after-hours socializing. Although I was frequently offered drugs too, I always turned them down, mainly because I am not a drug-user, and also because I did not want to risk my health, despite my dedication to participant-observation at its fullest.

My direct involvement with the informal social activities of the royalty was even more limited. At the beginning of the research, I did accompany them as part of the carnival entourage on a couple of jumps and, consequently, became privy to

some of their outside-work activities. But, as I mention in Chapter Three, I quickly realized I had to make a choice of 'allegiance' towards either the royalty or the workers. To continue fraternizing with the royalty would have meant losing the trust of the workers, and it was the workers themselves in whom I was most interested.

What did emerge from my first-hand experiences, observations and reports from sources "the morning after" was that in all these environments, the central features of the social interrelationships that existed between and among the carnival workers (and locals) were gender and class, but never race (which, in almost all other carnival relationships, also only rarely appeared to serve as a marker of difference between the groups of workers). In particular, the displays of protest masculinity and emphasized femininity, in a variety of forms, that I located in the social settings, indicated how critical these elements were to the ways that romance, sex and friendship were understood and expressed by the participants.

Dinners, Movies, Shopping and a Tan: Informal Socializing among the Royalty

Most of the royalty and independent owners appeared to maintain a relatively active social life outside the carnival domain itself. This freedom was facilitated by ready access to their own private vehicles, the right (and opportunity) to leave the lot whenever they chose, and the luxury of having much more money than the other carnival workers. Like the carnival workers in general, the royalty and independents tended to form themselves into small groups which remained relatively unchanged over the season. Rachel and Paul Sullivan, for example, socialized with Scott (the welder) and his partner, Janice, who worked in the office, as well as a few of the younger independents. The various groups frequently went out for dinner and to

movies, but mainly on the days before the show actually opened. Shopping was a common activity for the female members of the royalty. Janice and Rachel told me that one of the fringe benefits of Sullivan Amusements playing large exhibitions was that these expositions were often just one component of special town celebrations, and that local retailers usually capitalized on the heightened activity by having lucrative sales. The female members of this upper carnival echelon also regularly went to hairdressers and tanning salons in all the major centers that the carnival played.

The royalty and independents enjoyed many group gatherings in their various fifth wheel trailers and motorhomes — again, another 'perk' of having comfortable accommodations with all the amenities of home. On occasion, large amounts of alcohol were consumed (mainly by the males) but, in general, the social activities of the royalty and independents were not much different than those that one might find amongst any group of upper working-class people with sufficient disposable income and transportation. Another key characteristic of this group was the relative stability of the male/female relationships. During my time with Sullivan Amusements the only couple who split up were, in fact, Ron and Lynn Sullivan (although they maintained a business relationship).

Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll: Informal Socializing Among the Carnival Workers

Limited by few financial resources, lack of transportation and restrictions on leaving the lot, most of the socializing conducted by the carnival workers took place in the Pie Car, in the form of drinking, with occasional surreptitious expeditions off

the lot to accessible bars and nightclubs¹¹⁸. As well as the financial limitations, a further barrier to much off-the-lot socializing was the late hour at which the carnival often closed. The carnival's closing time varied somewhat, depending on the spot and the crowds, but it was rarely before 11:00 PM and more likely to be midnight or 1:00 AM. The ticket sellers were always the first of the carnival workers to finish work — the closing of the ticket box was a signal to the rest of the workers that the show would shut down within the next half hour or 45 minutes, after all ride tickets were used by customers. I was often made privy to the workers' social plans for the evening at this point in the night.

It was a constant source of amazement to me that the workers would then start gathering at their trucks or in the Pie Car and proceed to drink and drug often until dawn. On many occasions, I woke up in my tent and went outside for a pee (easy to do under the blanket of darkness). I would hear raucous laughter from nearby trucks, and see the shadowy figures of the carnies grouped together, sitting on the grass drinking. These same people would be roused from their beds at 7 AM or 8 AM for lot call, and we would all then start trooping towards whatever shower might be available, hoping to get there before the hot water ran out!

Romantic/sexual relationships between the male and female carnies tended to develop out of these night-time get-togethers. But they were invariably very short-lived. I noticed that relationships developed very quickly between partners. There

¹¹⁸In theory, they were not permitted to leave the lot after the show shut down for the night but, under cover of darkness, groups would sneak off behind the trucks towards the nearest bars.

were two factors that contributed to the speed and intensity of these partnerships. Living and working together, we all saw each other every day and so the process of slowly getting to know people was almost impossible. Secondly, there were rarely opportunities for the couples to go out on real "dates". The lack of time, money and opportunity for conventional dating led to quick relationships, usually sexual, that burnt out almost as quickly as they developed. These relationships were a constant source of gossip, innuendo and story-telling among the carnival workers and, rather like an ongoing television soap opera, the relationships created a common source of knowledge, amusement and entertainment for everyone in the carnival. I was often approached by carnival workers for advice on their romantic and sex lives, and I was constantly kept up-to-date on the latest developments, broken hearts, acts of unfaithfulness, and resultant intentions of revenge.

Beer, Breakfast and Posturing: Socializing in Public Places

On a few occasions, I went to bars and restaurants with male carnival workers, specifying that these were not "dates" per se (I made it well-known in the carnival that I could not date anybody as it would interfere with the research process). I always insisted on paying for my own drinks and meals, although it was usually the case that my male 'partner' would circumvent my stated wishes by paying the entire bill. In these one-to-one situations, I experienced nothing unusual from any similar social engagement that I might have in my social world outside the carnival. In fact, what I did find was that much of the bravado of these men, displayed often ostentatiously in the larger and more public carnival setting, disappeared in these more private domains, which illuminated even more the

salience of a collectivity in the presentation of protest masculinity. Our discussions often centered on issues that they all stated they were fearful of discussing with the other carnival workers — issues like missing their children, or a former girlfriend, or family back home. Again, this reinforced to me the element of trust which was so critical to my gaining even more insights into the carnival workers' understandings of their jobs and their social world.

However, in great contrast to the above-described social dyads that I experienced were the group activities in a public setting. Most of these public group activities demonstrated to me the high degree of insularity in the carnival culture, as the carnies would routinely ignore the locals in bars and clubs, fraternizing only with each other. I now relate two examples of these experiences that highlight the sense of differentiation experienced and expressed by the workers.

About two weeks after I re-joined Sullivan Amusements in July, the carnival played at an agricultural fair in Saskatchewan, and the word went around the lot that a dance was taking place in one of the halls, so many of us decided to attend. As a ticket seller, I was the first to finish working, so I went over to the hall, which was right beside the carnival lot. I bought a beer and stood alone, listening to the country music band that was playing. After a few minutes, a young man, dressed in his finest country attire (cowboy hat, jeans, Garth Brooks-ish shirt) started talking to me, declaring quite seriously that he was at the dance to find a wife. His father, who owned a large farm, had told him it was time he got married and, as social events were rare in this very rural part of the province, he came to the dance with the express purpose of finding his future wife. I gently told him that I should not be

considered as a candidate for the job, and pointed out a few young women in the large crowd that he might want to investigate instead. He sauntered off in search of his marital prey.

Shortly thereafter, a crowd of the carnival workers (ride guys and ticket sellers) entered, saw me, and responded with utter astonishment that "Fiona was drinking!!!", to which I responded that I was not quite as virginal as they all seemed to think I was, and that I did drink beer, only in moderation. The male carnies then began buying me beer, after beer, which I kept declining, and completely surrounded me, showering me with attention. At this point, the cowboy-in-pursuit-of-a-wife returned to me, having exhausted his search for a mate in remarkably short order. I attempted to introduce him to the other carnies, feeling this was appropriate behaviour, but each male carny turned his back on the man, refused his outstretched hand, and formed an even tighter circle around me, effectively freezing the cowboy out.

During this strange (to me) male-competition activity, I noticed that the female carnies had formed an equally tight group, beside but not amidst the male carnies, as if they also were protecting themselves against intrusion from the outside world. They appeared to be self-conscious and quite shy in their surroundings. Overall, however, the most outstanding element of this situation of the carnies being in a public, social locale was their complete disinterest in — and, what appeared to be, fear of — integrating in any way with the other dance attendees. There were many attractive young men and women at the dance, and neither the male nor the female carnival workers showed any interest whatsoever in talking to them or dancing with

them.

The evening ended with a scene of utmost embarrassment (to me). Two of the ride guys had swapped t-shirts prior to coming into the dance and decided to return them to each other at the dance, in the middle of a large throng of people. Peeling off their shirts, they unzipped their pants, dropping them below their waists. They then put on their original t-shirts, leaving their pants unzipped. I noticed the looks of utter horror on many of the onlookers' faces, and told the guys to zip up their pants, just as one would to a small child. It was only then that they seemed to realize they were in a public place outside the carnival domain — they responded by howling with laughter (as I did also), prancing around, and then finally doing up their pants.

I found the experience a fascinating glimpse into what I perceived as the fragility of the carnival culture when placed inside a structural location informed by more mainstream cultural rules. As well, it illustrated the uneasy relationship between the two social worlds. The carnies clearly felt most uncomfortable in situations over which they were not the dominant social force, responding in child-like fashion by creating insular walls through their behaviour and speech, which had the dual effect of repelling any attempts by others to invade "their world" and shoring up their own unique understandings of their social situation.

What I found quite ironic was that the people at the dance, against whom the carnies had erected barriers, probably had a great deal in common with the carnies in terms of social class. This was a solidly rural farming community, and the people living therein appeared to be a homogeneous group of working-class individuals.

But despite the commonality of being working-class, a further division was evident, illustrating the subjective interpretations of the carnies that *they were carnies*. In other words, their self-identity as carnival workers was used to create a situation of difference, rather than similarity.

The other significant theme that emerged from this social situation was the highly gendered behaviours of the carnies. The few carnival women who were there kept to themselves, other than talking with me when they could break through the phalanx of males surrounding me. And the male carnies clearly saw me as their "possession", to be protected by them against any attention from non-carny males. Paradoxically, the male carnies showed no such patriarchal ownership over the other carny women and, in fact, made subtle attempts to keep the female group separate from them. My interpretation of the events was that, despite being considered a fully-fledged member of the carnival group, my respectability separated me from the other carnival women, and it was that respectability that was valued and perceived as being in need of protection, whereas the carnival women appeared to be a source of embarrassment to the carnival males. Overall, however, I sensed that the male carnies seemed to be lodged in a subjective place of indecision and discomfort, unwilling to make social overtures to the non-carnival women, yet equally reluctant to integrate with the carny women, which I interpreted as a form of cultural and class-based conflict, resolved by looking inward towards each other and forming a collective sense of identity, buttressed by the 'respectability' that I represented to them.

Another experience that I had with a group of carnies in a social and public

setting was in a genteel hotel restaurant at the crack of dawn one morning. I had left a carnival spot on tear-down night without sleeping, as I was too near the rides (and the tear-down noise) to be able to sleep. Having driven all night, I arrived at 6:00 A.M. at the next carnival spot, where the only people I found was a group of joint bums lounging sleepily against one of the five-ton trucks. We all decided we were very hungry, and the only restaurant open was in a lovely old hotel nearby. As soon as we walked in, I sensed that this was going to be a unique experience. Our waitress was a quiet, gentle and elderly woman, and the other clientele in the restaurant were all well-dressed and elderly. There was an almost audible gasp of horror as we all sat at a table, a group of seven filthy, exhausted human beings (three of us female). After placing our orders, the group started talking amongst themselves loudly, using "fuck" in nearly every sentence. I buried my head in a Vancouver Sun that I was trying to read in an attempt to establish some degree of social distance. Again, the group seemed oblivious to their surroundings, the beauty of the hotel and its location and, more importantly, the other people in the small restaurant, who were staring with undisguised repugnance at our table.

I have never eaten a meal faster in my life, and I bolted out of there as quickly as I could after our bill arrived (which was greeted with "Holy Fuck! Seven bucks for eggs????"). After recovering, I was able to frame the situation more sociologically, recognizing again the insularity of the group, their apparent inability to adapt to a different social setting, and the clear class differences between the carnival group and the other restaurant customers. There were no noticeable gender differences in behaviour among the group. The females were as vocal and

their language as profane as that of the males. What the group did have in common — besides being joint bums — was their age: they were all quite young (ranging from approximately 17 to 21 years in age) and, for most, this was their first year working in a carnival. Their common bond was clearly their status as carnival workers, although this did not appear in any overt fashion. But their methods of communication and behaviour indicated a complete lack of awareness of the (mainstream) social practice of adapting one's behaviour to one's social surroundings.

Barbecue, Ladies' Night, and Pie Car Performances: "Organized" Social Outings

Over the carnival's eight-month annual season, there were three social events that could be categorized as organized social outings, one that was open to all carnival owners and workers, another that was for the "Ladies of the Carnival", and a third organized by the Pie Car owners supposedly for loyal Pie Car attendees only (although this seemed to be a rather arbitrary designation as I, for example, received an official invitation, though I did not consider myself an habitual Pie Car customer). In all of these events, social class and gender were the central organizing features, reflecting the social organization of the carnival, but in more stark and, often, parodied fashion.

(A) The [Northern Alberta Town] Barbecue

This event took place at the half-way mark of the season, towards the end of July, the night before the carnival opened on the agricultural grounds of a small town. Totally paid for by the owners of Sullivan Amusements, it was the only social event that included all carnival employees and owners and, in so many ways,

subverted the entire carnival social class system, while still maintaining rigid gender demarcations. The wives of the independents cooked and produced chili, potato salad and macaroni salad, while a couple of the senior male independents barbecued massive amounts of fresh steaks on an open barbecue. There were drums filled with ice and beer, all free to everyone who attended. Rachel and the other senior female administrative personnel served the food on paper plates, and even did the clean-up, walking around collecting the plates and beer cans in green garbage bags. The event was treated by everyone as a celebration of having survived the first half of the season, and it was the singular event where the carnival class hierarchy not only disappeared, but became temporarily re-arranged, with the owners serving the workers.

My sense from speaking with the other carnies was that, because this was a regular, annual event, they saw nothing unusual in the reversed roles of the participants. They also did not appear to be discomfited by the close presence of Ron Sullivan and other senior carnival personnel. In my notes, I observed that:

Everyone was just sitting around in their little groups, the same sort of social groups, the people they hang around with, like the joint liners were sitting with other joint liners, and the ride guys with other ride guys. But it reminded me almost of an afternoon wedding reception, or family reunion. Ron Sullivan was sitting by himself, with some of his old farts, and there were a few locals from the [Fair] committee there as well (9-17).

As soon as all the food and beer were consumed, most of the carnies (including me) left the lot for a nearby bar that had a live band playing. The festivities continued until the bar closed, with everyone in abnormally high spirits. Upon reflection, I interpreted the event, perhaps somewhat cynically, as an attempt by the owners to

maintain a stable work force.¹¹⁹ Another interpretation of the event was that it was a reward to the workers, but given the generally deplorable treatment meted out, and the other, decidedly more Machiavellian techniques of controlling workers, I tend to lean towards the former explanation.

(B) Dinner for the "Ladies of the Show"

In early August, I received a computer-printed invitation that read as follows:

Your invited to a special diner for the ladies of the show, on August 7 at the Keg in [central B.C. town] at 7 P.M. Please let me know if you can not make it. Thanks, Rachel [sic].

Also a traditional event, the "Ladies of the Show" dinner used to be termed "Christmas in July" where presents were exchanged, but for some unknown reason, they had decided to remove the gift-giving and Christmas theme this particular year. As per past historical practice, Rachel paid for the meal only, and any drinks were the financial responsibility of each guest. Rachel told me that, in previous years, only the wives of the independents and upper Sullivan Amusements female staff (or partners thereof) were invited to this function. She told me that they wanted me to attend and, because I was a ticket seller, they felt they also had to invite the rest of the ticket sellers so as not to offend them. Their inclusion in the event evoked great excitement among the ticket sellers, and I heard many chats about going out and buying a new dress for the occasion. However, Rachel expressed some concern

¹¹⁹When someone voiced an urge to quit the show, I often heard "You can't quit til after the barbecue!", as if that alone were sufficient to tolerate the difficult work conditions.

that the ticket sellers would bring down the tone of the occasion¹²⁰, which was clearly considered to be an upper-class outing and one normally reserved only for the *creme-de-la-creme* of carnival females.

We were all instructed to wait at a particular location on the carnival lot, to be collected by six taxis and taken to the restaurant. Twenty-four of us trooped into the steakhouse, and sat at one long table. Because of the seating arrangement, I was really only privy to conversations immediately around me, but one rather interesting development was my appointment as the official interpreter for one of the guests. The following is an excerpt from my notes about the assumption that, because I was seen as "educated", I automatically knew how to speak French (which, thankfully, I do):

Sparky's "woman", or old lady, as she's referred to, presumably she has a name, is also coming tonight, which is quite a surprise, as Sparky keeps her locked up in his fifth wheel and doesn't ever socialize with her, but Susan [Neil's wife] has told Sparky that she's coming tonight. She does not speak a word of English. She's from French-Canada, and Sparky has kept her sufficiently secluded and muffled in this trailer, so they asked me if I spoke any French and I said, well, yes I do, and so I'm going to be the designated interpreter... [My role as interpreter] generally came to a grinding halt because I didn't even know the woman, and even speaking English I wouldn't have really known what to say to her. It's hard to chit-chat inately when you don't even know somebody. Plus she was painfully shy (13-14).

It was a generally enjoyable experience for everyone there, but there was an almost visible barrier between the ticket sellers and the rest of the women. The ticket

¹²⁰I seemed to occupy what I used to call "Switzerland" in these types of situations — neutrality. I always attempted to remain unbiased towards either social class of carnival workers. In any discussions I had with the carnival workers about ticket sellers, the speakers always added the caveat "But not you, Fiona. You're not like the rest of them. You're respectable."

sellers sat together, and spoke only to each other, consuming vast amounts of (the free) food, and drinking copious amounts of liquor. One of the most distinctive differences between them and the other women was their attire. The wives and partners of carnival owners and independents were dressed conservatively, and many expressed pleasure at the welcome excuse to have purchased new outfits for the occasion. The ticket sellers, however, all wore mounds of garish makeup, and long, halter top dresses that showed off their tattoos, complemented by shoes that were in terrible states of disrepair. The attire of the ticket sellers clearly marked them as being of a lower social class than the other female attendees, reinforced by their finishing their meals and drinks quickly and leaving immediately for a nearby dance-club "to pick up men" as they phrased it.

Further evidence of the class-based categorization of the "*Ladies of the Show*" was the exclusion of many female carnival workers, such as employees of independents in the food joints and game joints. I heard many grumbles after the event from the women who were not invited, who all perceived a blatant double-standard at work by Rachel (the event's organizer), especially since the ticket sellers had been invited and they had not. The excluded women considered the ticket sellers to be in the same social class as them. In fact, they were not against the Ladies' Dinner as such. Many told me that it was perfectly acceptable for the "bosses' wives" to get together for dinner. It was the inclusion of those selected few deemed to be from a lower class that was at the basis of their angst.

(C) The Pie Car Party

The first event I described was open to all carnival workers and owners, while

the second was by invitation only to the "Ladies of the Show". This last organized event was, mainly, for the carnival workers, although the "royalty" also attended, albeit at a table at the farthest end of the hall and, consequently, the action. They were completely ignored by the carnival workers and left fairly early, after eating their meal.

The Pie Car Party was yet another annual event which took place the night after the show opened at the largest spot that they played, an exhibition in a central southern B.C. town. Hosted by Fred and Christine, who owned and ran the Pie Car, it was intended to be a kind of "thank you" to the carnies for their patronage. As I already mentioned, I was quite surprised to receive an "official" invitation (in the form of a piece of paper that said I was entitled to a free meal and two beer) given that I did not frequent the Pie Car very often, especially at night. (Most of my Pie Car visits were during the day/evening when the show was open, and I frequently went in for a hot chocolate to help thaw out from the often freezing cold weather.)

I had heard numerous stories about the legendary Pie Car Parties from the veterans: tales of debauchery, stripping, over-the-top drinking, and general high-level fun and games. It was clearly on the top of everyone's list as the social highlight of the season. I looked forward to attending the function, as I anticipated that it would be a source of much entertainment and very interesting data-gathering!

When I first entered the agricultural hall where the party was held, I immediately noticed the table full of royalty and was momentarily undecided about where I should sit. I was greeted with a chorus of hellos from the royalty, which indicated to me that I would have been welcome to sit with them. However, I chose

instead to wave politely back and make my way to the front of the hall where the carnies were seated. I was more interested in observing their behaviour than that of the royalty.

The event began quite sedately with everyone helping themselves to a superb smorgasbord of roast beef, potatoes and salad, topped off with the two free beer. Christine then went to the centre of a stage that was at the front of the hall, and announced that the annual Pie Car awards presentation would take place, stressing that none of these awards were to be taken seriously. What followed was a series of small cup trophies given out for categories like Asshole of the Year, Biggest Whiner, Guy Who Spent the Longest Time Behind the Steering Wheel of a Truck, Person Who Drank the Most Beer in the Pie Car, Guy Who Fell Down the Pie Car Steps Drunk Most Often, and similar designations. All of the winners, chosen by Fred and Christine, were ride guys.

The final awards presented by Christine were for King of the Midway and Queen of the Midway, and strongly showed the differential values placed on sexual activity and gender. "Queen of the Midway" was a euphemism for what was generally known as "the slut of the midway", the female perceived to have slept with the most carnival men. In previous years, one of the ticket sellers had always "won" this prize, but this year the winner was one of the female joint bums, who looked utterly devastated when her name was called out, while the rest of the carnies laughed uproariously and clapped their hands in agreement that the award was well-deserved.

The presentation of the King of the Midway award took a different format.

Christine called for any volunteer contenders for the award, and about eight carnival men, mostly ride guys, marched up to the stage. "King of the Midway" also had a sexual connotation, but in many senses it was a complete embodiment of the tenets of protest masculinity. The winner of the award was supposedly the man considered to be the most good-looking, sexually-active, strong and muscular. Sexual activity for men, therefore, was not vilified, but glorified and rewarded. I watched closely as the eight men swaggered confidently up to the stage, and proceeded to strip to the waist and then drop their jeans to their ankles, taking body-builder-like poses, while everyone else clapped and whistled appreciatively. What happened next took everyone by surprise -- a new entrant to the competition, Colin, who worked in one of the money (gambling) joints suddenly appeared. Colin was rather an anomaly, in terms of the other carnies. He was Moira's younger brother (age 21), and he held a full-time job as a computer salesman at a major retail outlet in Vancouver. He had taken a two-month leave of absence from his work to come out to the carnival for the summer, and was small, thin, bespectacled and almost the epitome of what might be termed a "nerd" -- the antithesis of a hegemonically masculine male. Despite his physical differences from most of the other male carnival workers, he was a fully-accepted member of the carnival culture, being most affable and possessing a terrific sense of humour.

As Colin bounced nimbly up the stairs to the stage to join the other more "manly" men, the audience broke out into cheers and guffaws. Colin obligingly removed his t-shirt and dropped his jeans, revealing a markedly non-muscular body, and then began aping the body-builder poses, evoking even more howls of laughter

from the crowd. His entry into the contest turned the event suddenly from one of serious, manly posings into an utter caricature. His competitors looked at him in disgust and horror, as if they could not believe that such a specimen would even dare to join their midst. Christine then carried on asking us all to applaud as she pointed to each male contestant. The man who had won in previous years, a very macho ride guy, looked horrified as the crowd exploded with applause when Colin was indicated. Colin won the contest, to the onlookers' joy and the other contestants' utter disgust and disappointment.

Next on the agenda for entertainment was a series of contests, that nobody seemed to understand, which involved eating whipped cream out of pie plates and running around inside green garbage bags, and lots of kissing between the male and female contestants (I declined to join the contest!). The grand finale to the evening was a wet t-shirt contest (for female entrants only), but, again, with an interesting carny twist. Volunteers were called upon, and three female carnival workers leapt onto the stage. But three more were actually physically dragged onto the stage by male partners. However, once they arrived there and their captors left the stage, they did remain. I did wonder whether the reticence was feigned, or if they felt coerced into remaining on stage.

Christine then called for bids by the male onlookers to have the "honour" of throwing a pot of water on each contestant. The winner was a male joint bum whose successful bid was \$10. As soon as each woman was doused by the pot of water, they lifted up their t-shirts to expose their breasts (none were wearing a bra). I watched (in private horror) at this display, and the winner was decided based on

the amount of applause she received from the audience.¹²¹

Showgirls, "A Good Woman" and the Search for Prince Charming: Romantic/Sexual Relationships

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, most of the carnival royalty were in stable, married or common-law heterosexual relationships. However, the majority of the carnival workers were single, and engaged in either very casual one-night sexual relationships with each other or locals, or maintained a steady stream of monogamous relationships within the carnival.

A. The Men¹²²

Many of the male carnival workers had short-term relationships with locals whom they had met while the show was open. Most of these encounters consisted of local females hanging around the rides or games after the show closed, and then going off with the male workers to their cabanas or trucks to drink, do drugs and have sexual relations. These relationships were considered by most of the male workers as ideal: sexually-satisfying yet non-committal.

The female carnival workers tended to have relationships more with other

¹²¹When the invitation for female contestants to this contest was announced by Christine, a chorus of "Fiona! Fiona!" rang out from the male members of the audience, as they tried to get me to go up on stage. Thoroughly amused and embarrassed, I said "Look, guys, I only go so far when I do research!". After the winner was decided, two of the ride guys came up to me and said "Fiona, you were the winner. You didn't even have to take a stitch off. We know you're the winner!" (26-21).

¹²²My decision to separate this discussion into "The Men" and "The Women" is based on the social norm of heterosexuality in the carnival. I did not directly observe any bisexual or homosexual relationships or behaviour (other than the flirtatious activity of one of the female independent employee towards me and other women, which she doled out equally to the male carnival workers). My findings and arguments, therefore, are based on directly observed behaviour which was clearly heterosexual.

male carnies. Because the male workers far outnumbered the female workers, these female workers had a vast array of men from which to choose, and the rapid turnover of male employees created an ongoing "supply" of romantic/sexual partners.

The pursuit of long-term relationships with carnival women by the men was rare. Most of the young female carnies were considered to be "showgirls", a euphemism for sexually-active females with multiple or serial partners, and were seen as immoral and almost certain to have a sexually transmitted disease. I found that it was the more seasoned male carnival workers who held this opinion, garnered from experiences that left them with a lack of trust and respect for these women as possible girlfriends, illustrated in the following comments by Ryan, a ride guy with several years' experience in the carnival:

Every time we play a new spot we try to pick up as many pretty girls, and some not so, that we can. I have had girlfriends that also worked for the carnival but these were not long-lasting. My first year out here I met a girl who just joined up and got together with her. This lasted for about two weeks though we did continue sleeping together on and off. The one thing I have learned is that it is damned near impossible to have a serious monogamous relationship with a showgirl because the ratio of guys to girls working on the show is too wide and sometimes it seems that everybody wants a piece of her. All said and done I have put my preference towards local girls because you do not have to commit to anything (Ryan 4).

The men tended to be quite content to maintain friendships with the carnival women, devoid of sexual contact. Their preference was to find a "local", and a primary motive for having a brief sexual encounter with a non-carnival local woman was to have a warm, dry bed and access to a shower or bath!

Those who did engage in relationships with carnival women were more likely to be newcomers to the carnival. However, I did find that, despite their declaration of avoidance of "showgirls", even many of the veterans had "one-night-stands" with carnival women on occasion, although they always excused their behaviour to me by blaming their "slip" on too much alcohol and/or the woman's sexual aggression towards them.

I also found an interesting paradox with the male carnival workers. Most of them, in private conversations and interviews with me, expressed a longing for a permanent relationship with a "good woman", saying that if they met such a "good woman", they would gladly leave the carnival and settle down. On the other hand, they relished the opportunities to engage in non-committed sexual relationships, comfortable in the knowledge that the show would soon be leaving town, rendering any truly permanent relationships almost impossible without leaving the show. A very few men did leave the carnival after meeting a "good woman", but almost all eventually returned some weeks later, explaining that the relationship did not work out.

What I did find in general, however, was a real fear of commitment to one woman only. Most of the men had children and former partners (in some cases, several sets thereof). They spoke privately to me about missing their children, producing worn-out photographs of their children when they were very young, saying they had not seen their children in years. They spoke of the mothers of these children, ex-wives and/or former girlfriends, often wistfully and regretfully. Some of the men even cried when telling me about their children. However, despite their

rhetoric of wanting to find a "good woman" and "settle down" into what they considered a stable relationship and existence, the lure of sexually-available women, who were easily forgotten by them the next day, transcended any truly dedicated search for long-lasting emotional relationships.

B. The Women

The female carnies, although fewer in number, were much less homogeneous in terms of their femininities and their attitudes towards sexual/romantic relationships. Most of the women practiced overt emphasized femininity. They dressed provocatively, with low-cut, tight tops and very skimpy shorts or tight jeans, wore lots of make-up and, like the rest of the carnies (including me), were constantly filthy, an almost impossible state to avoid given the frequent lack of easily-accessible showers and washrooms (and the almost constant non-existence of mirrors). Most of these women were young, and worked as either joint bums, floss chicks or ticket sellers. They openly professed to me that their main reason for being in the carnival was the pursuit of men, and their main "targets" were carnival men. These were the women who were labeled as "showgirls" by the male carnies, and they were treated by the men largely as sexual receptacles when no local woman was available.

I did notice, however, a difference *within* this group. Some of the women/girls had strong desires for a long-term romantic relationship with the men they pursued. Others, on the other hand, avoided any potentially permanent relationship. The women in this latter group simply had a series of monogamous and mainly sexual relationships with the male carnies, ending the relationships if and when they

perceived that the men were "getting serious", which indicated a strong fear of emotional commitment.

A factor common to this group that practiced emphasized femininity was children. I was astounded to learn that nearly all of them had one or two small children at home. In most cases, they had signed custody of the children over to their mothers. Most of these women were quite young (16 - 24), had never married, and had little or no contact with the father(s) of their children. The relationships that produced these children were short-lived and many were fraught with violence. In numerous cases, their children's fathers were in prison. Like the male carnies who were absentee fathers, the women also expressed strongly to me that they missed their children. Yet, none of them had any concrete plans to return home and resume any direct parenting.

One such woman was a ticket seller, Crystal, who was 19 years old and the mother of two children, a one-year old daughter and a two-year old son. In an interview, she described the situation with her children and their fathers:

- Fiona: Tell me about your children.
Crystal: Well, I have two very adorable, precious children, my pride and joy.
Fiona: And what's the situation with their father or fathers?
Crystal: The biggest assholes that ever lived. When I got pregnant with my son and I told his father, he punched me in the stomach and I had severe hemorrhaging because I wouldn't have an abortion. I almost lost my son.
Fiona: So you were in a relationship with this guy?
Crystal: Yeah, from the age of 12 to 16. He has no contact with his son whatsoever. He wants to. He's on the hunt right now to take him away from me. That's why my mother has them. And my daughter, her dad is always in jail so he's never around either. My daughter's dad comes and sees them when he's out of jail. My son's father is 26 this year I believe, and my daughter's

father is 22.
 Fiona: So your children are with your mother?
 Crystal: Yes, I signed custody over to her last summer. My best friend died five days after my daughter was born and their fathers [her voice trails off]. Just a lot of problems and I didn't want to put my kids through it. They're better off with my mom.
 Fiona: Yeah. It must be hard though.
 Crystal: Oh, yeah it is. I cry every time I phone home. I cry myself to sleep a lot of times. I miss them a lot. It just breaks my heart, because I'm still their mommy but he calls my mom, Ma, for Grandma, Mama, and I'm Mommy. I miss them a lot (9-2).

Crystal was besotted with Ted, a ride guy, and claimed to me that they had a loving and committed relationship. She hoped to marry Ted one day. Ted, on the other hand, declared to me that no such relationship existed and I certainly saw little evidence of it myself. Ted spent most of his non-work time with his ride partner, Sam, and they were both dedicated to the pursuit of bedding any local women they could find. It seemed, therefore, that Crystal had created a subjective interpretation of a committed relationship which, to Ted, was merely a casual sexual relationship that he could always count on being available to him, attesting to his avoidance of commitment.

Another theme that emerged in my examination of the women who practiced emphasized femininity was intense rivalry for the carnival men's affections. Shania, a six-year veteran of Sullivan Amusements, positioned herself as the woman most sexually attractive to the male carnies. (This was the same ticket seller who saw me as her rival and systematically attempted to usurp my "position" through techniques of intimidation.) Whenever we were paired in the ticket box (which I avoided as much as possible), the ride guys would saunter over and start flirting with me, much to her annoyance. She always responded by screaming their names and showing

some part of her anatomy (bare breast or upper thigh) to them, as she also did in a local bar:

My interpretation of Shania is that she resents any female carnival worker attempting to dethrone her from what she perceives to be her position as the pet favourite. She was telling me that, awhile back, she was very drunk — she boasts about how drunk she gets — and apparently Candice [another ticket seller] has a reputation of when she gets drunk, she [exposes her breasts]. They were in this bar and they were talking about Candice doing this which annoyed Shania because it meant she wasn't the centre of attention. So, she proudly told me "I flashed my tits" (Personal Notes 3-44).

I also learned that she had berated Crystal, who had been promoted from joint bum to ticket seller. With her promotion, Crystal temporarily became quite arrogant and boastful (according to Shania) about her raised status which seemed to include purchase into a more highly sexually attractive category, according to the social class system in the carnival. Many sources told me that Shania got Crystal alone in a bar washroom and threatened her with physical violence if she didn't discard her pretenses of sexual magnetism.

It is also important to point out that there was a further gendered aspect to the carnival's social class system that applied particularly to those women who practiced emphasized femininity. There were several instances during my time with Sullivan Amusements in which a young "showgirl" formed a romantic/sexual attachment to a male in the upper echelons of the carnival, thereby elevating her social status. One of the ticket sellers, Candice, began a relationship with Matt, who co-owned the most lucrative joint line, in 1997, according to several carnival friends. She moved into his fifth wheel trailer and eventually stopped working as a ticket

seller, becoming his assistant as well as his romantic partner. In the last chapter, I also refer to a woman who worked as a floss chick and eventually became Paul Sullivan's partner (after Rachel and Paul's relationship ended), also thereby elevating her social position in the carnival. It was possible, therefore, for women to gain entry into a higher social position through liaisons with male royalty members. However, I did not observe (or learn about) any instances where males of a lower status became attached to women already established in higher social positions, largely because nearly all the female royalty members were such by virtue of relatively permanent relationships with carnival royalty men.

Other female carnival workers, who were in long-term relationships with other carnival workers, reflected a much more independent spirit (but were in the numerical minority among the carnival women). Generally slightly older than the ticket sellers and joint bums, these were women who worked in (and, in some cases, co-owned) food joints or other independent concessions. Many of them were in their 30's and 40's, and had been with Sullivan Amusements (and other carnivals) for many years, often citing their entry into carnivals by the common practice of an initial attachment to a carnival male. Many of them (like the ticket sellers and joint bums) were heavy alcohol and drug users.

The unattached, older women tended to avoid any relationships with carnival men, preferring to meet locals. They also told me of fractured and often violent prior relationships, and most of them also had children, but they rarely spoke to me in depth of their children's whereabouts. I had the sense that the carnival culture provided them with a welcome escape from tumultuous former lives, and that their

years of experience in the carnival had taught them to avoid the pursuit of romance and "happy ever after" illusions, which were so often expressed by the younger females.

These women were strong, independent and extremely dedicated, hard workers. They were not in the carnival to find a man (as were the younger women), but to simply live their lives as free, independent women. Most of them had no job skills beyond working in the carnival, and told me that the carnival was the only place where they would ever be able to find work. The women certainly represented a particular kind of femininity that was more reflective of the masculinist carnival practices — they were women doing masculinity without its sexualized component. Quite outspoken about their disdain for the younger carnival women who had sex with so many men, they also considered the generally promiscuous sexual behaviour of the men to be equally abhorrent.

In many senses, they reflected strong, feminist views of equality and independence (despite working in low-prestige and difficult jobs), and appeared to see me as a kindred spirit. The following experience and my reactions to it illustrate this point:

Liza and I had just opened the ticket box and we left the back door open because it was so hot. All of a sudden I felt a hand clamp onto my calf and go up and down the lower portion of my leg. I screamed. I turned around and there was Hank [one of Ron Sullivan's old farts], on his knees in the ticket box. I screamed again and pulled my leg away and he staggered off, drunk as a skunk. I was very angry, and I slammed down the lid on my cash box and told Liza I was going to the office to complain. I dashed to the office and told Rachel what had happened and that it was completely unacceptable, that it was sexual harassment, and she had better do something about it. She was outraged at what he had done. She said he'd been on a three-day drunk and had been doing all

sorts of offensive things to people. On my next trip back to the office, Rachel said she had told Ron. Ron had marched over to Hank's joint, leaned across the counter, grabbed him by the hair, pulled him over the counter, and fired him. Later on that day I went into the Pie Car, and Christine said "Ah, here's the lady with the famous million dollar legs!". I turned around and said "Are you talking about the Hank incident?" She said "Yeah, good for you. That bastard had it coming to him. Nobody around here has the balls to do what you did. None of the women do. None of the girls do, but you did. Good for you". So, Hank got fired because of me. Sort of a dubious claim to fame, but I guess he was already on thin ice with Ron (Personal Notes 28-3/4).

The older, more independent women in the carnival were far less likely to receive any offensive sexual harassment from the workers, so this occurrence was highly unusual¹²³.

Informal Socializing on the Lot

In the first chapter, I mention that one of the benefits of conducting research on a working-class social group is the almost constant presence of jocular bantering and humorous interpersonal exchanges. In almost every working class environment in which I have worked there has been a degree of humour that seemed to correlate to the amount of hardships experienced from the work itself¹²⁴. Sharing the same difficult conditions provided a sense of commonality amongst

¹²³I was actually afraid that I had overstepped my bounds when I went to the office and complained, and was astounded when I heard that Ron Sullivan had fired Hank, which showed me that even loyal, long-term employees and friends of the royalty did not occupy unconditionally secure positions. Hank, however, was renowned for his alcoholism, and at the previous spot, spent half a day (while the show was open) wandering around the lot in his housecoat and slippers while sipping on a highball, until the "word" from the office was to find Hank and lock him up in his fifth wheel trailer. His grabbing of my leg in the ticket box was clearly the last straw in terms of his being permitted to stay in the carnival.

¹²⁴For example, during my work for the R.C.M.P. as a radio-operator, I recall ongoing practical jokes being played on co-workers, as well as between police officers, often based on a macabre sense of humour that grew out of dealing with ongoing crises on a regular basis.

groups of workers that similarly gave rise to mutually-understood jokes and humour that alleviated many of the work pressures and stresses. The carnival was also rife with laughter, humour and jokes shared among the workers. Much of it involved sexual bantering between males and females, while other sources of humour were devoid of a gendered component, such as groups of workers spontaneously dancing at their rides and behind their joints, while listening to the music blaring from one of the major rides. As well as dancing to the music, workers would often “play air guitar”, pretending to be heavy-metal rock stars, while I would feign playing the drums in the ticket box. Customers would be completely unaware of this activity, the carnival participants physically separated on our various rides and joints and ticket boxes, yet drawn together by a shared activity.

Another form of social activity that drew the carnival workers together was the ever-present gossiping about people’s relationships or sexual activities. The latter also included the carnival dogs: several independents and members of the royalty had dogs which roamed around the carnival (one replete with r-clips on his collar to aid the ride guys during teardown). Even the dogs’ sex lives were a topic of ongoing conversation, and one such coupling between two quite different breeds of dogs resulted in a canine pregnancy, which elicited much joking about the expected appearance of the puppy progeny.

The humour did much to offset the difficult work conditions, as well as the tedium involved in most of the carnival jobs which involved very routine work which, once mastered, became an almost unconscious activity. I myself marvelled at how quickly I evolved from having to labouriously calculate ticket sales amounts and

make change, to being able to carry on a conversation with a fellow ticket seller while at the same time conducting a ticket-selling transaction, after only about two weeks of doing the job. During slow periods the ticket sellers would play crib and read magazines, interspersed with humorous conversations with ride guys who meandered from the rides, forever watchful that Ron Sullivan or one of his designates would catch them away from their posts.

All of these methods of passing the time humorously had the effect of drawing the workers closely together as a group, and making the work itself recede into the background as something that we all only incidentally did, rather than placing it at the forefront of our daily activities. The socializing among the carnival workers helped all of us to make sense of the work and the totality of our carnival experiences, and did much to alleviate the monotony during the time that the show was open, and the difficulties encountered in the harsh working conditions.

Racialized Social Activities and Relationships

I did not observe, or experience, any processes of racialization in any of the social aspects in Sullivan Amusements. Aboriginal and Metis workers were as likely to associate with White workers as with each other. Ride guys tended to group together with other ride guys, while joint bums usually drank and partied with other joint bums. However, there was also much intermingling of the groups as well.

Regarding sexual/romantic encounters, I also saw no racialized dimensions. Ride guys, both White and Aboriginal/Metis, did not discriminate between White and any other racial category of women. Most of the locals that they met appeared to be White. But it was also the case that all of the spots the carnival played were in

White-dominated communities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the various formal and informal social activities and interrelationships of the carnival workers which serve to augment their carnival work lives to varying degrees, based mainly on the schisms within the culture based on social class and gender.

For the royalty, the socializing outside of work time was seen as a privilege that they had earned based on their economic comfort and status within the carnival hierarchy. The shopping expeditions, dinners and movie-going were conducted casually, arbitrarily and, most importantly, autonomously. But for the rest of the carnival workers, the socializing occupied a much more salient role in ameliorating the difficult work conditions. Their preference for types of socializing that almost always involved consuming vast amount of liquor and drugs¹²⁵, and having sex with other carnies as well as locals served quite literally as an escape from their arduous work and equally tormented past personal lives. None of these lower level workers seemed to be consciously aware of the impetus for overindulging in all three activities: the need to anaesthetize themselves from emotional pain, as well as the carnival's physical demands.

However, it became clear to me, given their dysfunctional backgrounds about which they spoke at length during interviews and casual conversations, that the

¹²⁵ A source of puzzlement to me for a period of time was how the workers could even afford to buy the liquor and drugs, given that most of them existed on the \$30/day drag. Key sources told me that the workers simply did without food, and pooled their money to buy the drugs and beer. I was also told that a few of the younger female workers engaged in acts of prostitution with their carnival drug suppliers in exchange for cocaine.

social activities were central to their enjoyment of the carnival culture as a whole. While many of the carnival royalty also had experienced tremendous hardship prior to entering the carnival, their more privileged social and economic positions permitted them to engage in activities in addition to drinking and drugging¹²⁶, which was less visible due to their more sumptuous and private living accommodations.

¹²⁶Although I never observed any of the royalty partaking in drugs, I was told by many carnival workers and owners (including the ones who abstained), that nearly all the senior male carnival owners had severe cocaine habits.



Fiona at her ticket box



Pointing to the Key to the Midway

Chapter 11

Tearing Down and Heading Out: Conclusion

Tommy [ride guy] just came by and give me a big hug and told me how special I was. I told him why I had to leave the carnival so suddenly, that Moira went wacky and I didn't need it so I left. And he goes, well, you know, you're always welcome here. I said, thank you very much. He said, "I think I speak for the whole carnival". I've just left the lot, with some fairly confused feelings. I said goodbye to quite a few of them. A few of them I'm going to see down on the coast later. I have a strange lump in my throat as I walk down the road towards the car. Even the generator sounds good. A strange feeling, as I walk away from the lot. It's been quite a summer, quite a spring, summer and fall, and I leave of course with mixed feelings. The chaos in [central southern B.C. town] definitely has left a residual bad taste in my mouth, very unfortunate on a personal level, very interesting from a sociological point of view (Personal Notes at last spot 36-6).

Fights, Hugs and Bitterness: Leaving Sullivan Amusements

I have mentioned several times in this thesis my attempts to remain 'sociological' throughout the research project, an endeavour that became increasingly more difficult as time passed. Constantly monitoring my reactions to my observations and experiences, I recorded the gradual disappearance of my world outside the carnival, and took calculated steps to remain as connected as possible, by reading newspapers, staying in motels every ten days or so (that had the added benefit of being able to have a bath and make telephone calls), and always spending at least one night a week, on the jumps, away from the carnival itself.

Despite these precautions, I could feel myself getting pulled into the carnival culture, almost unavoidable given the in-depth nature of the research site and methodology. I needed the trust of the other carnival workers to obtain data and to attain that trust, I needed to be seen by them as a fellow carny. If I had maintained

a thoroughly distanced stance and position, I strongly doubt that I would have been able to acquire the experiences and, consequently, the data that I did.

My absorption into the culture, from the perspective of a participant-observation ethnographer, served a useful purpose in experiencing what I would term anticipatory disengagement anxiety about one month before the end of the season. I began to have strange dreams at night, always involving conversations with friends outside the carnival, wherein I babbled often incoherently using carny language which they could not comprehend, walking away from me as if I had transformed into someone they did not know. When I was awake, I frequently found myself thinking about my home, but I could not "place" *myself* in my home. In my musings, my home felt alien, as if I no longer belonged there.

All of these experiences led me to suspect that, if I was having strange nocturnal dreams and meandering and confused thoughts about returning to the "outside world", the other carnival workers must also be experiencing some degree of anticipatory disengagement anxiety. I knew that many of them, with the exception of the royalty, had no idea where they would be going "over the winter", as the break between seasons was called. Some talked vaguely about finding some kind of work, while others planned to go home to their parents' houses and simply sleep for four months! Many of the younger carnies talked excitedly about finding rental accommodation in the Vancouver area, staying together as a group to save costs until the spring, when the carnival season began anew.

I began my investigation of their reactions to leaving the carnival culture by asking some of the veteran workers, including Rachel and Paul, if anything unusual

happened in the carnival as the season end approached. Rachel's response was typically pragmatic — they start getting rid of workers, so that they are down to a skeletal work-force by the last couple of spots. I did notice that from early in September onwards, many workers did leave, having worked sufficient weeks to claim Employment Insurance¹²⁷.

There were several factors that simultaneously announced the impending arrival of the end of the season and served as a kind of signifier, and catalyst, to the workers that they were about to be propelled back into mainstream society. The most significant marker of nearing the end of the season was that the show split. Half the carnival rides and entourage went west, while the remainder (which I chose to stay with) was scheduled to play in spots in southern central B.C. Those who left with the split knew that they would not re-connect with the remainder of the carnival until the beginning of the next season, so farewells began quite early. Most of the ride guys and joint bums who were leaving on the split came over to the ticket box to say goodbye to me. I recorded the following just prior to the split:

There seems to be a lot of genuine affection among the workers. Lots of goodbyes going around. I found that when a lot of the ride guys came over to the ticket box to say goodbye to me, they'd put their hand in [through the small opening], in a very affectionate way. I hugged everybody that I came across that was going down to [split destination], and there were lots of people hugging me, saying "I may never see you again but I'll never forget you" (Personal Notes 28-9).

However, I noticed that, after the split, other emotions began to run high, exacerbated by the escalation in drinking and cocaine-usage. Tension permeated

¹²⁷However, many workers were also fired from that time onwards also, with the reason that their drinking and drugging were interfering with their work.

the air and I noticed that many people were impatient, with other workers and customers¹²⁸. Arguments between the carnies grew more frequent, and many romantic/sexual relationships ended, punctuated by highly visible yelling matches on the midway.

Another theme that emerged in the pre-end-of-season period was threats of violence. I was told on numerous occasions that one person or another was going to "beat the crap out of" somebody else at the end of the season, in some form of retaliation for alleged season-long unresolved hostilities. I often heard ride guys and joint bums muttering ominously to each other that the "season's ending soon" which, I learned, was meant as a threat that once the season was officially over, they intended to exact revenge over an unresolved vendetta. During my time away from the carnival, when I had to leave for safety reasons, I learned later that there had been a huge fight among some very drunk ride guys at one of the spots.

When I returned to the carnival to make observations on the last spot, which I felt was critical in completing the research (as well as giving me some much-needed closure), I recorded the following, which captures the general atmosphere:

Pretty interesting stuff going on here. Basically, sparks are flying everywhere. Jim [veteran ride guy] has been fired, for being drunk and getting to the lot late. He said something to Frank who was telling him off and Frank fired him. Ted got fired because he and Sam were drinking in their truck and Frank came over and demanded to see if they

¹²⁸Ted and Sam, for example, took great delight in "making them [customers] ride til they puke" (32-7), which the bosses quickly stopped after customers staggered up to the office to complain. Also feeling the tension somewhat, I found myself being impatient with some of the ruder customers. In one case, a young boy tersely demanded "Gimme a family" meaning that he wanted a Family Pack of tickets. I responded with "Would you like a single-parent, nuclear or dysfunctional?" as my co-ticket-seller burst into howls of laughter and the boy looked at me as if I had gone insane.

had booze in their truck. Ted jumped out and basically slammed Frank up against the side of the truck and threatened to punch his lights out. So Frank fired him, though I found out later that Ted had just received word that night that his brother had been killed. But I had been talking to Ted and he didn't tell me his brother had been killed. He was kind of philosophical, ho hum, who cares, about being fired but I got the sense that he was actually quite shattered about being fired. Sam looks like the wrath of God [hungover]. He's on his own now on the ride [because Ted got fired]. Sam told me he was in agony the night before, because he had to pee, but Frank wouldn't let him leave his ride as some kind of punishment. I had a chat with Dwayne [ride guy], who was very pissed off. He said "You can cut the air with a knife here on the lot. Feelings are running very high". They've been told there are no bonuses this year. But Rachel has been given a brand new car, parked right beside their fifth wheel which is right behind the Orbiter, and Dwayne said "How's that for rubbing it in our faces. You'd think they'd have the decency to wait until after the show closes before they produce this brand new car". He's absolutely furious. He said they're not even being given bus tickets to get back to [the carnival's Winter Quarters] (Personal Notes 32-13/14).

I was told by numerous other workers how furious they were with the royalty. The kiddyland foreman in particular was very angry as nearly all his ride guys had quit or had been fired, and there were still several hours left in the final carnival spot. What I found especially interesting, however, was that many of the alleged infractions that were being used by the royalty for firing the workers were behaviours routinely carried out over the season by workers, such as drinking in the trucks or arriving back onto the lot late. The carnival "policy", as it were, forbade drinking in the trucks and being late for lot call, but usually these infractions were over-looked, unless the behaviour was frequent and the worker was considered to be expendable.

A third significant theme that emerged in my observations of, particularly, the last carnival spot was how completely uncaring the royalty were at the plight of fired and angry workers, and the exhaustion being experienced by the remaining workers, a now minuscule work-force that still had to face a final tear-down. Their attitude

confirmed to me that their subjective understandings of their workers were framed in utter contempt for the workers as human beings. The workers were only valued to the extent that they could perform the work necessary for the carnival to be economically viable. As this was the last spot, and the last few hours of the carnival season work, the workers were seen as little more than left-over irritations to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

A New Appreciation for Comforts: Arriving Home

Before describing my reaction to returning home after nearly 3 ½ months of almost total carnival immersion, I need to point out that my first departure did not happen in quite the way I had intended, as I explain in Chapter Eight. I had not anticipated suddenly having to leave the show two weeks prior to the season's end for safety's sake, under such traumatic circumstances that were compounded by my car break-down. Paramount during my drive after leaving the lot in great haste and tremendous fear was my own personal safety. I understood enough about the carnival culture and its informal justice system to know that getting off the lot was not necessarily enough to guarantee my safety. It was not until I reached my hometown that I began to feel a slight sense of relief.

My first impressions upon my arrival home involved space and cleanliness, accompanied by the sensation of feeling peculiarly out-of-place. My second impression was how astounding it would be to be able to use my bathroom at will, never having to line up again to use a shower (or have to pay \$2 for four minutes therein, one of the many fine survival arts I learned while with the carnival).

I also developed a new appreciation for my electric appliances and taps with

running water, as well as my own comfortable bed, although it took several nights to get used to sleeping in it¹²⁹.

Sleeping continued to be a problem for about two weeks. Despite being exhausted, my mind would come alive at about 10:00 PM, rendering me an insomniac until about 3:00 AM, no doubt a combination of the trauma and the weeks-long habit of working until midnight or 1 AM. I also could not get into a "normal" eating routine, as I was so used to having breakfast at about 10 AM and then only one other meal, around 3 PM. Eventually, as the days and nights passed, my routine began to evolve, as I adjusted to returning home.

However, as I stated earlier, I did want to return to the carnival to observe the last spot, which I felt was critical for the research project, and gave rise to much of the findings explained at the beginning of this chapter. My return home at the end of the last spot was yet another adventure. I was once again car-less as the rebuilt motor proved to be defective, so I caught a ride with a carnival joint bum who also doubled as a driver. He had asked me to be his "swamper" (assistant), as he had been beaten up by Bucky¹³⁰ and was in very rough shape. I agreed to accompany him, as I thought it would be useful to experience a jump in a carnival ride truck. We left town at about midnight, after tear-down, wending our way very slowly down to

¹²⁹ John, the Lot Superintendent, also told me that at the end of each carnival season, unable to sleep in his bed, he had to spend at least a week sleeping in his trailer parked in his driveway, in order to adjust to being home.

¹³⁰ The joint bum had made the mistake of buying some cocaine off another joint bum on the midway while the show was open, and had been observed by someone who ratted him out to the royalty. His punishment was typical: a nocturnal visit by Bucky, one of the designated beating crew.

the coast. The truck had bald tires and only partially-functioning brakes, so we had to make frequent stops to "cool the brakes", fueling ourselves with coffee to stay awake.

Our destination was Winter Quarters, which was a large acreage in a rural location in the Greater Vancouver area, owned by Ron and Lynn Sullivan. The property contained the Sullivans' home, a large ranch-style home (which actually reminded me of South Fork, the Ewing home on *Dallas*, very fitting for a showman and his wife!). There was also a huge open warehouse, filled with various ride components and other maintenance equipment. We arrived at 5:30 AM, and I immediately crawled into the back of the truck for a sleep. The joint bum and I had arranged to get a ride into Vancouver (where he also lived) with another joint bum who knew somebody who had a car, but they never arrived so, once again, I was stranded. I spent several hours wandering around Winter Quarters, chatting with the constant stream of carnival workers (drivers) who were arriving with the rides and other equipment.

Eventually, I found a ride into Vancouver with Alana, the wife of Jim, the mechanic. (Under Lynn's patronage, Alana and Jim were permitted to park their trailer at Winter Quarters over the winter season, and Alana was going into Vancouver to shop.) I finally arrived home at around 3:00 PM, completely exhausted but very thankful. Because I had only been away from home for a week (and had spent that week in the comfort of a home of some friends), I did not go through the same kinds of reactions (and withdrawal) that I experienced with my earlier "expulsion" from the carnival. I arrived home with a much larger sense of

relief that the past few very difficult weeks were over.

Making Sense of It All

Emerging totally from a highly insular and differentiated cultural environment like Sullivan Amusements, after such intense immersion, was a protracted process, made more difficult by the sudden return to long periods of social isolation. However, almost immediately, I began a Research Assistantship which involved working a few days each week examining and analyzing documents at a conventional office. For the first few weeks, I found myself constantly comparing where I was working to the carnival, feeling acutely self-conscious, and afraid that I would inadvertently lapse into carnivalesque language and banter. Coffee breaks, which I often spent with the female office workers, were also a difficult adjustment, as the women tried (in vain) to include me in their chats about recipes, clothing and home decor. Initially, it felt strange not to be engaging in the lively carnival interpersonal exchanges, but I gradually adjusted to my new “work” environment.

Another example of the carnival remaining very much alive in my thoughts and behaviour was my reactions to a construction site right beside my house. Every day for the first few weeks, I stood and watched the workers, struck by the contrast with the carnival. The construction workers all wore safety shoes and hats, and the whistle blew at precise times for coffee and lunch breaks. The work stopped at exactly 4 PM every day. There were many parallels between carnival jobs (particularly for the ride guys) and the construction project that I watched — both involved heavy manual labour, climbing up to dangerous heights, and working outdoors, often in rainy and windy conditions. I began to ponder more and more the

differences between this more conventional work environment and the one that I had just left.

In sum, the process of re-emerging from such a highly insulated social environment into more mainstream society involved several steps: the first was nothing short of a jarring re-introduction to more conventional life that was emotionally distancing and disorienting. The second step involved several weeks, diminishing over time, of constantly comparing what I was presently experiencing and/or observing to what I had left behind in the carnival. This period was also extremely critical in terms of the gradually emerging themes around the carnival research. What began as notations of contrasts between the two very distinct social environments developed into areas that resulted in the substantive chapters in this thesis: violence, social activities, mental labour, and the articulation of protest masculinity in manual labour.

Transcribing the tapes of oral data, a process which took almost one year to complete, also served to make sense of the entire research project as a totality, helping to re-focus my attention away from the traumatic events of the last period.

Locating the Key to the Midway: Research Findings

I began my research on Sullivan Amusements with the question of why people engaged in work that was difficult, low-paid and almost utterly devoid of legitimate business practices, and have shown how my answer to this question — masculinity — combined with issues of social class, sexuality, racialization and femininities to produce workers and working conditions that served the economic and social interests of the carnival owners.

In Part I of this thesis, I explained how and why I chose to enter the research largely unbound by theory: the dearth of previous studies on North American carnivals, a relatively unique social and work environment, did not provide me with any guidelines, theoretical or methodological, from which to shape the research prior to entering the field.

The use of an ethnographic methodology to conduct the research was based on my decision to attempt to capture as much data as possible, and develop themes and theoretical strengths later, after emerging from the carnival. My selection of feminist theorizing permitted me to retain my own subjectivity in the research, weaving it throughout the data collection as well as this thesis, thereby positioning myself as much the researched as the researcher. My decision to use the words of the carnival workers as much as possible avoided any possible misinterpretations or distortions through paraphrasing and "translation" into purely sociological terminology.

Gender and Sexuality:

I have demonstrated in this thesis that masculinity was the key element that sustained the hierarchy of power and interpersonal relationships within Sullivan Amusements and underpinned the interpretation and expression of work and social activities by the carnival royalty and workers.

More specifically, elements of protest masculinity and emphasized femininity were located, in various forms, among the groups of workers. For the men who practiced protest masculinity, the emphasis on the body as a tool for work and manifestation of a highly sexualized representation of their worth as (primarily)

heterosexual men was found in several significant areas in the carnival. The ride guys extracted opportunities for self-expression from the arduous and often dangerous work that they performed, while the male joint bums derived pleasure, often couched in verbal terms of physicality, in highly skilled financial transactions with mooches that relied on the joint bums' mental skills.

Other than the few women who found satisfaction primarily in the form of escape from former lives, most of the women displayed overt forms of emphasized femininity, also using their bodies to meet the sexual expectations of the carnival men, with a few adhering to the dream of finding a permanent partner, and others shunning the perceived entrapment of a full-time committed relationship. For them, the carnival offered a location where they could live out their self-images of sexually attractive young womanhood. Unlike the men who practiced protest masculinity, the work did not provide them with the conduit for self-expression; rather, the social activities and sexual/romantic relationships were the central areas where they found meaning in carnival life.

Although I did locate some hidden forms of bisexuality and homosexuality among some of the carnival workers, the norm of heterosexuality formed a significant infrastructure in the social relations characteristic of protest masculinity and emphasized femininity. The fact that the homosexual acts were so deeply camouflaged by the outward displays of heterosexuality speaks to the discomfort inherent in a social environment that implicitly assumes a singular sexuality, thereby belying the multiplicity of sexualities practiced by people. Despite the absence of overt homophobia in Sullivan Amusements, the carnival culture was clearly not

deemed to be a safe environment for those engaging in sexual activity other than prescribed heterosexuality. The exception to this was the homosexual (and pedophilic) activity of the senior Sullivan Amusements man, whose power and authority gave him protection against the revulsion held by the workers for his pedophilia.

I also found that there were not always clear-cut distinctions between masculinities and femininities, nor were either of these two categories themselves one-dimensional. I argued that there were two overlapping sets of hegemonic masculinity practiced by the male carnival royalty. The first type was a form of hybridized hegemonic masculinity, where elements of mainstream hegemonic masculinity were woven through a more particularized hegemonic masculinity found among carnival showmen to produce what one might argue was a kind of parody of mainstream hegemonic masculinity. As the owner of Sullivan Amusements, Ron Sullivan represented this form of masculinity most blatantly: on the carnival lot, he would swagger through the midway, resplendent in his cowboy hat and polyester suit, swinging a set of keys and glaring ominously at the workers¹³¹. However, placed within the context of mainstream society, his appearance and manner of autocratic ranch-owner was decidedly odd, and highly derivative of iconic 1980's male television characters. The second type of hegemonic masculinity that I found, also practiced by the male carnival royalty, was constructed in relation to the

¹³¹ Many of the workers told me that the sight of Ron Sullivan marching through the midway terrified them and, if he was swinging his set of keys, this indicated that he was looking for somebody to fire, which was perceived to be Sullivan's way of responding to the carnival not making enough money at a particular spot.

carnival workers themselves, who idolized and feared the authority embodied in the bosses with their ostentatious wealth and authority. More removed from mainstream hegemonic masculinity, the unique carnival showman image was one that many of the carnival men yearned to emulate, yet the image was inextricably tied in with material possession, which for most of the carnival workers was a dream that they would never actually attain.

Some women in the carnival also practiced forms of masculinity, in most cases as a consequence of learning that the rewards held out by emphasized femininity had not met their expectations, with the outcome that they chose instead to forgo the trappings of a femininity designed to procure masculine protection and the associated status. They found instead that by practicing elements of masculinity such as physical and emotional toughness, independence and skepticism of long-term committed romantic relationships, they reaped rewards of respect from others, both men and women, as well as a high degree of independence and strength to withstand the rigours of carnival life and work. Although few in number, such women tended to work for independents, although the woman who best represented this form of "masculine" femininity, Penny, had her own independent business: a woman in her 40's, she was steadfast in her refusal to acquiesce to the demands of Dwight, the lot man, who gave her very bad lokes which effectively destroyed her opportunities to earn money. Instead of practicing the emphasized feminine characteristics of flirting and obeisance to male authority, she responded to his orders by quitting Sullivan Amusements, and looking elsewhere for a carnival more accepting of her non-compliance with expected gender roles of carnival independent

contractors.

Through their work and social interactions, both the men and the women made sense of their lives by weaving their subjective understandings of life in general into their experiences, providing the carnival owners with a male work force that endured and, frequently, celebrated their conditions of hardship into heroic exercises of 'manliness'. For the women practicing emphasized femininity, the environment provided them with masculine (and, occasionally, feminine) affirmations of their sexuality and worth.

Processes of Racialization:

I found that racialization acted only incidentally in most areas in Sullivan Amusements, a White-dominated environment¹³². Although it is certainly the case that historical discriminatory practices against Aboriginals and Metis in mainstream Canadian society created the conditions of poverty, low education and lack of employment opportunities for most of the non-White carnival workers (all of whom were Aboriginal or Metis), once inside Sullivan Amusements, the non-White workers did not experience treatment that was any different from the other carnival workers. Almost completely absent from any of the mental labour jobs found on the joint lines, the Aboriginal and Metis workers, who were almost all men, chose to work instead on the rides, where their reputations as a dedicated, reliable and hard-working group provided them with a high degree of job security and affirmation of

¹³²As a White researcher, however, I need to acknowledge that my Whiteness may have impeded my abilities to observe issues of racialization, other than those that I have noted. I also need to point out that I limited my discussions of racism and racialization in this thesis, given the lack of any observed or reported evidence of these issues (e.g. I did not investigate everyday racism).

their personal worth as strong and valued employees.

With regard to social activities, both formal and informal, I found no evidence of racialized segregation or discrimination other than, again, the fact that most people tended to socialize with those with whom they worked most closely. Given that the majority of ride guys were Aboriginal or Metis, it was also the case that they also socialized together, but their groups were just as likely to include White men as non-White men.

Class:

Social class in Sullivan Amusements was found to be a significant marker of difference, power, prestige and privilege, and centered around the ownership, or lack thereof, of carnival properties in the form of rides and/or game joints. Economic privilege flowed out of material possession, both directly and indirectly. Those who owned the most lucrative rides or game joints enjoyed the largest financial incomes, both to themselves as well as Sullivan Amusements. The degree of prestige and status that they received within the carnival, then, was directly related to the amount of money that they earned for the show. Benefits to acknowledged wealth were better locations on the carnival lots, greater personal freedom, and overall respect from all carnival workers and bosses. Those who were not owners of any of the carnival rides or games and who were more likely to labour for one of the owners were deemed by themselves and others to be of a lower social class. Outward manifestations of this distinction could be found in the substandard living accommodations, segregated social activities, almost constant control by the carnival bosses over the time and bodies of the workers, and the

abrupt and dictatorial speaking tones of the bosses towards them.

The workers themselves tended to accept their lowly status on the carnival hierarchy as natural, inevitable and largely insurmountable. Although I observed many instances where workers, as individuals, rebelled against the inhumane treatment and conditions, I found that the anger was rarely sustained and was usually forgotten completely a short while later, attesting to the overall credo of "living for the moment" with little reflection or consideration of cumulative injustices.

Other than the few young women who experienced upward class mobility in the carnival by engaging in relationships with carnival royalty men, the class system created a rigid system of demarcation between those who held financial power in the carnival, and those who worked for wages. However, I have also shown that the carnival community as a whole displayed a status consciousness, in direct relation to the outer communities, sustained and perpetuated by mutual dislike and disdain.

Some Concluding Thoughts on Sullivan Amusements

Sullivan Amusements may very well be one of the last of the traditional carnivals in North America. The American attempts to modernize (and clean up) their carnivals seem to be moving into Canada. This is not because the Canadian authorities are becoming more vigilant of carnivals. Rather, a new generation of carnival owners (in most cases, the sons of retiring owners) in the United States is influencing the entire North American carnival culture — the "old style" of carnivals is being considered passe by the younger inheritors.

Marcus, the Lot Superintendent at the American carnival, spoke to me at length about attempts to clean up carnivals south of the Canadian border. For

example, drugs, other than prescription drugs, were completely forbidden in the American carnival. Marcus told me that "if you're caught with aspirins, it's considered a drug", particularly for the truck drivers. This particular American carnival instituted a drug program the year before where they drug-screened all their employees. The truck drivers were drug-screened three times a year. Anybody found to be using crack cocaine, amphetamines or barbiturates was fired immediately. People found to be using marijuana were given a verbal reprimand and then moved out of the position that they were in for a period of thirty days. The carnival also put them into counselling as "there's always some kind of drug rehab group in every town you go to in America" (Marcus 78). After thirty days, they got tested again to ensure there were no drugs in their systems. They also had a Breathalyzer and used alcohol swabs to test any employees who had been drinking.

I have no way of corroborating the information given to me by Marcus, other than doing participant-observation at other American carnivals. However, the workers at the U.S. carnival showed every indication that they lived and worked in much more humane conditions than those at Sullivan Amusements; Marcus pointed out the clean and spacious bunkhouses in which all carnival employees lived. Only one crew (one of the joint lines) lived in a bunkhouse with heat and electricity at Sullivan Amusements. The American carnival workers were consistently clean, relaxed and a generally happier, more contented group of people, which is evidence for the argument that good accommodations results in a healthier and more productive work force.

I knew first-hand how difficult it was living in a tent (and, later, briefly in a cold,

damp cabana), with no running water, accessible showers and toilets, and heat. I also noticed that I became increasingly uncaring about how I looked as time went on, although I always paid attention to healthy eating habits and sleep. But for the workers at Sullivan Amusements who made do with the seriously sub-standard living accommodations, their only recourse was to indulge in overuse of drugs and alcohol to mask the pain and discomfort of living in such deplorable conditions.

The use of drugs and alcohol at Sullivan Amusements was rampant, and escalated as the season progressed (my "attackers" were all well-known cocaine users). Paul Sullivan told me that it is illegal in Canada to drug-test employees and that they found it impossible to control the drinking at Sullivan Amusements. However, if the Pie Car was replaced by a more modern facility for workers like the legitimate concession trailer at the American carnival that provided showers, laundry facilities, and healthy meals -- and no alcohol -- such systemic improvements would raise the overall levels of the workers' health and well-being.

Much of the impetus for modernization of American carnivals can be located in the media exposure of the traditionally illegitimate practices of North American carnivals, and the consequential ongoing scrutiny by United States authorities. In Canada, however, media attention to carnivals has been minimal, mainly because they are such a minor part of Canadian life, practice and culture. The only government bodies that have the jurisdiction to watch carnivals are provincial Gaming Commissions. But these commissions are very short-staffed and do almost no ongoing monitoring of carnivals. In fact, it was a highly unusual occurrence for the R.C.M.P. to have inspected Sullivan Amusement's game joints. The carnival's

administrators felt sure that someone must have made a complaint and demanded an inquiry¹³³.

I found what I consider to be further evidence of the lack of legislative and institutional interest in carnivals when I made inquiries about the high levels of violence that I observed and was told about in carnivals. Upon my return home at the end of the research, I telephoned several policing bodies to find out if they were aware of the informal policing system in carnivals (without mentioning this particular carnival) and every police department and R.C.M.P. Detachment to whom I spoke told me the same thing. They simply do not have the manpower [sic] to cover carnivals, and carnivals come so rarely to their areas that they do not warrant a special group of investigators. In such a climate, it would appear that carnivals in Western Canada can continue to operate in their traditional style without fear of monitoring or prosecution.

¹³³The only ongoing inspections of the carnival were conducted whenever the show moved into another province. At the first spot, provincial Electrical Inspectors would descend on the carnival just prior to the show opening on the first day. I would watch with great amusement (and, often, horror) at the procedure: The carnival electricians would always know when the inspectors were coming and would prepare the lot accordingly. There were minimal safety requirements that the carnival was supposed to meet, but never enough equipment (such as electrical plugs or certain connections on the rides) to satisfy the regulations. Like a well-choreographed dance, the carnival's electricians would stay one jump ahead of the inspection crew — as soon as one ride was inspected, they would remove a hastily-applied piece of equipment, dash behind the rides to the next ride and quickly attach the same piece of equipment; this ritual would continue around the entire lot.

Another possible Electrical Inspection scenario, and one which I observed at least twice, was the attendance of inspectors well-known to the carnival. I saw much back-slapping and brotherly guffawing, followed by extremely perfunctory "inspections" of the rides by the inspectors. Although I never did see any overt indication of bribes, I did wonder if any special "arrangements" had been made between these inspectors and the carnival.

Attesting to the dangerous conditions of many of Sullivan Amusements' rides, several carnival joint supervisors told me in August 2000 that the carnival was "about to be D.Q.'ed in B.C." (disqualified from operating in British Columbia) because their rides had failed too many safety inspections and were considered unsafe).

A further barrier to their modernization is economic. If a carnival wants to attract a more 'sanitary' worker, the owners must offer exceedingly improved accommodations, wages and working conditions. But, as long as they are able to find people who are willing to endure the present conditions, there really is no inducement for improvement. Carnivals are finding it more and more difficult to attract customers, given the vast array of alternative entertainment now available. Neil, a veteran carny, told me that in years past, carnivals used to make much more money, especially on the gambling games, which used to bring in at least \$900 a day, whereas now the money wheels only generate about \$200 a day. According to Neil, carnivals used to be the only places where people could legally gamble in Canada, and now, with provincial lottery tickets, V.L.T.'s, and places like the Great Canadian Casino readily available, people are less likely to come to the carnival to gamble. Neil also commented that gambling in general has lost much of its allure to people, due to its easy accessibility. To stay competitive, it may be the case that carnivals will have to fundamentally alter their forms of entertainment (rides and games) and suffer temporary financial setbacks, in order to survive.

Another carnival worker who commented on the decline of carnivals was Cece, the joint line supervisor, who also had many years of experience in several Canadian carnivals. He began by stating that one of Sullivan Amusement's western Canadian competitors continues to survive by constantly expanding and buying the latest in carnival rides, in order to offer contemporary thrill rides to the public. He doubted that Sullivan Amusements would last much longer, due to the owners' unwillingness to adapt to a new economy and more demanding general

public:

Small shows, like this one, won't survive. Small shows won't, 'cause, like for example this year, one of my traps at one of the spots, my games themselves, we went into this one spot. We had one game up for ten days and we grossed \$200. In ten days! That's \$20 a day average. That's our gross. Stuff like that. I can keep my expenses down by working my own game, if I don't have to pay people. The only thing I have to pay is my stock and my mouth. I think that's the way it's gonna turn out. People are also wanting to go high tech. They're not interested in the older games any more. They want games where they either win money or it's flashy and they got lights and sirens and bells and whistles. Group games are wonderful. The Wacky Wire is dying out. It's getting old. People are learning it. But it's still a good game. But anything high tech will make money. Anything that's not high tech is not going to make money. The rides they're coming out with these days. The rides are exactly the same. They're just flashed better. They got more noisemakers, more lights, more bells, more flashy things. And people are always attracted to flashy things. But, I see a lot of changes. People like Bucky. Pretty soon there isn't going to be anybody like them. They're dying out. They're like dinosaurs. People like [names three young agents], those are like the second generation after Bucky. And you're losing them even. They're going into different things. It's been ten, fifteen years for them, for a lot of them, and they see the money isn't out here any more. These guys can make money, but nowhere near as good as it was ten years ago though. It's been seriously going downhill. Everything's been going downhill for ten years and if it doesn't start picking up soon, you're not going to see a travelling carnival come around any more. The people don't want to spend the money but they want the carnival there. You can't work that way. We all have to eat (Cece 16).

It certainly seems the case that Sullivan Amusements has not taken steps to modernize its operations with the result that its largest competitor on the west coast of Canada is flourishing, while Sullivan Amusements is now both financially and organizationally crumbling under the weight of fiscal debt, out-of-control drug problems and the consequential loss of many of their most lucrative rides and independent contractors.

Sullivan Amusements has adhered to its traditional practices with the result that it now appears to be facing radical changes or possible extinction. Following

the example of their American counterparts, carnivals in Canada clearly have had to evolve in order to survive. It is doubtless the case then that the practices that I observed at Sullivan Amusements will be rendered to past history, as modernization and competition force the owners to adapt and thoroughly revise their previous methods of doing business, which will have significant impacts on the workers themselves.

The job that I was offered by Sullivan Amusements (running the concession) reflected the son's attempts to modernize the carnival. As image is always at the forefront of a carnival owner's concerns, Sullivan Amusements wanted to make a concerted effort to have workers who appeared better groomed and more well-dressed. They sent around an announcement towards the end of the season, therefore, announcing that this new concession would appear at the beginning of the next season, and that workers would be required to buy carnival t-shirts and jackets from the concession. Workers were told to wear only black jeans, and males had to be clean-shaven and short-haired. I made inquiries¹³⁴ on several occasions over the next (1997) season to find out whether any of these measures had actually materialized: the answer was always "no".

Similarly, Paul Sullivan had decreed that none of the known drug users would

¹³⁴I have remained in contact with several of my carny friends since leaving Sullivan Amusements, four of whom I interviewed after the end of the 1996 season. These interviews were particularly fruitful, as the carnies were able to be far more self-reflective of their carnival experiences. I also found it very therapeutic to be able to talk to them about the events leading to my leaving the carnival, as they were among the few who could readily understand the context. I actually spoke to very few people outside the carnival about the experience, as I could not find the words, for a very long time, to frame the experience in ways that they might understand, yet another testament to the uniqueness of the carnival culture and its social practices.

be permitted back to work for the carnival after the 1996 season. This presented the carnival with quite a quandary, as nearly all the most skilled/knowledgeable carnival workers were serious substance abusers. Again, when I inquired during the 1997 season, I learned that all of these workers (most of them veterans) had been re-hired. However, I was also told that it was the intention of the carnival owners to retain these workers only long enough for them to train new (and drug-free) workers — the intention was to fire the more seasoned workers about one month into the season. I was told that, ironically, this mass firing did not happen, not because of any ethical concerns, but because the carnival had been unable to attract any reliable, drug-free workers.

In August 1999, I conversed with two long-time carnival workers (one a joint line foreman for the trailer joint line and the other a joint bum) and learned that Sullivan Amusements had, indeed, fallen into tough times economically. The drug usage (cocaine) had escalated even higher, to the point of driving many veteran workers away, some of whom had moved on to other carnivals.

Lending credence to Neil's claim of prior financial interest in Sullivan Amusements, my carnival friends informed me that Neil had quit working for the carnival and had taken many of the major rides with him, locking them in his garage, with Ron Sullivan then launching a lawsuit against him. This action had severe consequences for Sullivan Amusements. Due to financial difficulties, they sold and were unable to replace many of their larger rides (on top of the ones taken by Neil). They only had one relatively large ride left and it was in a state of serious disrepair

when I was with the carnival¹³⁵.

Personal relationships in the upper echelons of the royalty also underwent some significant changes. Lynn and Ron's marriage ended although, as of August 1999, they were still very active in the carnival. Rachel and Paul's relationship also ended, with Paul becoming involved with one of the "floss girls". Rachel embarked on a relationship with another man, whom she met on a cruise (and had no carnival experience or background, to my knowledge), and he became the Lot Superintendent, with various of his relatives also working for the carnival. Rachel continued to work for the carnival, having been awarded the fifth wheel trailer and all the money games in a court settlement.

In August 2000, I again spoke to several key carnival workers at the Pacific National Exhibition who told me that Rachel had left Sullivan Amusements, and that Paul's relationship had ended. He was still very active with Sullivan Amusements, but both Lynn and Ron Sullivan had also left the show.

With the loss of major rides and revenue, Sullivan Amusements subsequently lost many of their most lucrative spots and most of their long-term revenue-generating independents also left for other, more stable, carnivals. The person in the carnival who appears to have benefitted the most from these economic difficulties was Gary (owner of the mid-size joint line). His joint line expanded and he has been lending money to Sullivan Amusements, so now has even more power

¹³⁵During my time with Sullivan Amusements, I had several conversations with key carnival personnel about the age of the carnival rides. I was told that the average life-span of a carnival ride was forty years, and that most of the rides in Sullivan Amusements were at least that old. When asked what happened to the 'retired' rides, I was told that they would eventually be sold to a fixed-site carnival in Mexico.

and control in the carnival. My informants also told me that Neil had formed his own carnival company, in partnership with Gary and his joint line, and that Lynn Sullivan was working with her son to try to keep Sullivan Amusements a viable operation. Sullivan Amusements had lost most of their largest carnival spots to their main carnival rival on the west coast, and it was the general opinion of those to whom I spoke that Sullivan Amusements was close to complete economic collapse, having so few rides left and very few independents who were still willing to work alongside them.

Due to the fragility of Sullivan Amusements' future, and the uncertainties inherent in all but the most economically-viable carnivals in Canada, one may wonder what lies in store for the carnies, where the physical expression of gender is so central to their lives. There is no question that traditional carnivals, like Sullivan Amusements, exploit their workers' experiences of oppression to the fullest, and one would hope that all of the remaining carnivals will stop resisting changes that would ameliorate the often inhumane working and living conditions of the work force on which they rely to set up, run and tear down the show.

Contributions of this Thesis:

This thesis adds to the growing number of studies on Canadian working class environments, particularly those that recognize the salience of gender, racialization and social class in the formation, perpetuation and articulation of working class culture. By becoming thoroughly immersed in the carnival culture as a worker and fellow carnival "citizen", I have been able to give a voice to a group of people who are, for the most part, invisible and ignored, not only in academic literature, by the

mainstream population in general.

A further contribution of this thesis is that it adds to the increasing studies on masculinity, and augments Bob Connell's research on protest masculinity by examining some of the ways that working class men understand and make sense of their lives. It adds valuable data to other studies that focus only on working class manual labour, and sheds light on the mental labour also done by marginalized working class men and women. It further contributes to the literature on emphasized femininity, and illuminates the relations of reciprocity inherent in protest masculinity and emphasized femininity.

By including the varied social activities undertaken by the carnival men and women, this thesis also examines the extrinsic methods by which working class people make sense of their difficult and, often, monotonous work: the extracurricular activities that help to offset the hardships inherent in work that is closely watched and controlled by others in positions of power and authority.

This thesis has also demonstrated how violence is used in various forms to control a work force that, although often opposed to the techniques of brutality, in particular the actions of the beating crews, offers tacit agreement to its usage by interpreting it as an inevitable and natural characteristic of a work domain where physical punishment is simply another work difficulty to be endured and, in many cases, glorified.

Areas for Further Study:

An area worthy of further inquiry, raised by this thesis, is the hidden element of homosexuality and bisexuality amongst working-class males, especially those

embracing the most marginal of masculinities: protest masculinity. The salience of compulsory heteronormativity in Sullivan Amusements adds to the work by others (e.g. Kinsman 1987, Connell 1995 and McLaren 1997) that signifies the social construction of heterosexuality, thereby camouflaging sexualities that are much more fluid and far less bifurcated than they appear on the surface, pointing again to the illusory dynamic of hegemonic gender roles. In addition, the bisexuality practiced by the Aboriginal/Metis men in the carnival might be explained by further research into literature on "two-spirit" or alternative genders in First Nations cultures in North America (see Jacobs 1997 and Lang 1999).

Yet another area worthy of exploration is the process of racialization in the area of work. In this thesis, I have argued that the Aboriginal and Metis men were considered to be ideal employees and were rewarded with higher prestige, albeit limited by the "glass ceiling" which affected all ride guy employees, not just those who were non-White. However, there may be other areas of employment where the racialization process operates in similar contradictory ways, whereby systemic racism may prohibit, or limit, employment opportunities in some areas, with the consequence that, in the few occupations where non-White people are able to find work in unskilled or semi-skilled labour, they are deemed to be ideal employees, based purely on a racialized belief that has more to do with the paucity of alternative jobs available.

Similar to the above, further studies on emphasized femininity would be helpful, especially those that examine how working-class women who practice emphasized femininity weave meaning through sexuality into their jobs, such as

female clerks in retail stores, and how their emphasized femininity may be exploited by owners (male and female) of businesses that rely on their sexualized female employees to reap economic rewards¹³⁶, such as in the case of the female joint bums in Sullivan Amusements.

Limitations to the Research:

Given that this thesis is based on the only in-depth study of a North American carnival to date, its limitation is that it is a case study of only one carnival. Further studies on other carnivals in both Canada and the United States would add much to an area that has been neglected by the academic world. There is no question that gaining entry to carnivals has been almost impossible in the past, due to the owners' distrust of the mainstream world. However, as more carnivals are coming to the realization that, in order to survive economically, they must legitimize their practices, it may be that they will welcome more readily examination and perusal from social scientists.

A further limitation of this thesis is its central focus on the carnival workers (as opposed to all carnival occupants). I have explained that this was a choice that I needed to make early in the research. This decision arose after I deduced that the inflexible carnival class system would render equally thorough observations and interviews with all carnival groups almost impossible, given the salience of trust in

¹³⁶Another highly gendered and sexualized job that exploits emphasized femininity is that of "bait girl". A young woman in Nanaimo told me about a "bait girl" job that she quit after two weeks, thoroughly disgusted at the treatment that she received from male fishers. Young women were hired in the summer months by marinas to sell bait to (mainly male) fishers, and male marina owners would compete to find the most sexually-alluring "bait girls". Male fishers would often have someone take their photograph with the "bait girl".

interpersonal relationships that had important implications in data-gathering and the open-ness and honesty of those with whom I spoke. Further studies, therefore, that focus on carnival royalty would add immensely to the findings in this thesis.

Despite the limitations, the findings of this thesis become even more significant in light of the changes occurring in the carnival industry in North America. Sullivan Amusements presented a work domain that depended on the successful exploitation of marginalized men and women. At the same time, however, the carnival provided a location where elements of protest masculinity and its female complement -- emphasized femininity -- could flourish and imbue meaning in the work and social lives of a largely ignored segment of Canadian society whose voices have been silenced for too long.

Lot Call

The Generator screams from Dawn til Dusk
for a kiss of Power to light the Lot
monsters of Motion wailing to rise
To fill the silence with mobid [sic] cries
and How terror fills their screams of fear
Praying that soon this ride will end.

Meanwhile clouds are hanging overhead
filling the lot with rain
But there is a place called Kiddieland
where we suffer all the same

Just four tickets to me and you sold your soul for fear
Beyond the Point of Sweet Redemption
More pity, Tis all but a Dream
For the Buckets they are spinning...
Oh yes they are spinning!

While echoes of joint friends calling them in
fill the Midway with Poverty and their aprons with change
as I watch the sunrise — and I watch it set.
O, This is the Life — I'm so sure it is
our t-shirts and caps unit [sic] us as friends
Hey the ticket Box is Down time for a Drink.

In The Darkest corner of the Lot
its' [sic] somewhere there Behind the trucks
They call it the Pie-car — I call it Home
where I hang my hat and lay my cloak

O, when the lot slips from beneath my feet
and the monsters of Motion must rest
I'll need a lot call for next year
yes, and the year after that.

Sincerely yours, The Immortal Troubadour, Humble Valentino.¹³⁷

¹³⁷This poem, written by a Metis Kiddyland ride guy, was up on the Pie Car wall. I copied it exactly as it was written, with his permission. "Valentino" is his chosen pen-name.

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Glossary

Agent:	Very experienced and successful joint worker who is highly valued by the joint line owner (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Alibis:	Joints where the joint bums avoid giving out stuffies by giving an 'alibi' (e.g. "Sorry, your foot was over the line", or "You leaned too far over to make that shot") (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Back-end:	Rides
Beef:	Complaint from customer (as in "Cooling out the beef")
Belly Cloth:	Heavy material draped along bottom of rides and truck trailers for aesthetic purposes
Bennies:	Caffeine pills or other stimulants used to sustain the workers, especially during teardowns and jumps (also called "speeders")
Bitch Bath:	Washing body parts at a sink or available tap
Bite:	The act of a piece of machinery, usually a carnival ride, that injures a ride guy (as in "The Orbiter gave me a bite".)
Boosters:	Shoplifters, who will often try to sell their stolen goods to carnival workers on the lot
Cabana:	Usually hand-made wooden compartment located behind cab of semi-trailer truck, where ride guys sleep
Cheating:	Starting to tear down ride or joint before carnival boss calls end of show
Clerk:	Joint worker who is not an agent and is seen as less-skilled
Carny:	Carnival
Cooling Out:	Placating an irate customer (see "beef" above)
Demonstrator:	A person (carnival employee) who uses the house money in bets to put other potential gambling customers at ease [Chuck, an independent with a novelty joint, whose involvement in carnivals goes back to the 1950's told me about this. He was a demonstrator at Playland in Vancouver in the 1960's.]
Dog Fuck-er/ing	(n) Lazy person; (v) Avoiding work

Doghouse:	Cage at a carnival ride from which the ride guy operates the ride
Donacher:	Toilet
Double-Back:	Act of a carnival truck driver, after taking a ride to the next spot, having to return to prior spot to get another ride
Drag:	Daily wage paid out in cash
Fair Board:	Administrative group with which carnival owners negotiate contracts to play at particular functions, e.g. exhibitions, rodeos, country fairs (also called "The Committee")
Flash/ing:	(n) Stuffed animals and other items hung up in the joints; (v) The hanging up/displaying of the items (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Flat:	Game joint where the agent completely controls whether the mooch wins or not, often dice games where the 'winning' combination is impossible to attain; a.k.a. flat store (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Front-end:	Game and food joints
Gaff:	Rigged game (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Grab Joint:	Food joint
Groundscore:	Any item found on the grounds of the lot by a carny, most lucrative locations being under a carnival ride from customers' pockets
Group game:	Game that needed more than one player; e.g. water gun game where players tried to move an object up a post and winner is object that arrives first
Hanky Pank:	Game with cheap prizes, also known as a build-up game (e.g. balloon store where the object is to get the mooch to keep throwing darts, thereby 'building-up' to a larger prize) (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Hard:	Coins
Harry/Harriet:	Name used by joint bums to call in a mooch (as in "Hey, Harry!")

Hole:	Open job position, usually in a joint (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Independents:	People who owned their own ride(s), games or food joint(s) and pay a percentage of their take at each spot to the carnival owner
Jamb Auction:	A carnival 'game', now extinct, that involved selling an item to a group of people clustered around the joint, charging them \$10 and asking the people to be auctioneers. ("Jamb" refers to "jamming it to the customers") As each item was being held up for bids, the person running the Jamb Auction would ask the customer holding the item up to show everybody. [I was told about this game by Scott, the welder, who came from a long-time carny family. He said his father used to run this game at the Calgary Stampede about 25 years ago. They would do three or four shows a day, and easily make \$2500 an hour. He said the police would stand and watch with amusement, because the game was just barely legal, but it got to the point where it was hard to do the game in small spots because the word would get around and they would almost get run out of town.]
Joint:	Concession or game (in Hautzinger 1990)
Joint Line:	Collection of game joints
Joint Bums:	Game joint workers (also called "joint liners")
Jump:	The act of travelling from one carnival spot to another (as in "going on the jump", or "jumping from [one town] to [another town]" (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Jumping In:	Getting hired to work at a joint
Kicking Out:	Awarding a stuffed animal to a customer at a joint (as in "Kick an animal out")
Laying Out the Lot:	Deciding where all the various carnival components will go at a carnival lot
Lifer:	Long-time carnival worker (usually 20+ years experience)
Live:	Joint customer who looks as if he/she has money
Loked:	Located: where the rides/joints are placed on the midway
Lot:	Location where the carnival set up its rides and games

Lot call:	Time that workers have to be at their designated rides or joints, usually an hour before the show opens (As in "What time's lot call?" "Ten for eleven": meaning that the show opens at 11 A.M. and they are to be at their place of work at 10 A.M.) (Also in Hautzinger 1990)
Lot lizard:	Female (usually young) who hangs around the carnival lot; a.k.a. "lot lice"
Midway:	Actual carnival set-up, usually horseshoe-shaped; also refers to the main (usually central) portion of the set-up show
Mooch:	Game joint customer
Nut:	Percentage that independents pay to the carnival owner
On the road:	Travelling with the carnival from spot to spot for the season
P.C. Store:	Game joint where operator gets a percentage commission
Pie Car:	Truck trailer that serves as a private cafeteria/bar/general socializing spot for only carnival workers
Pig Iron:	Carnival rides
Points:	Percentage (as in "I have to give Sullivan 25 points" meaning "I have to pay Sullivan 25% of whatever money I make in the joint")
Possum Belly:	Compartment at the bottom of truck trailers used to store equipment, usually carnival ride parts (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Possum Belly Queen:	Sexually promiscuous female carnival worker
Power man:	Electrician
Princess:	Female who either is, or shows pretensions towards being, socially "above" other carnival workers
Punk Rack:	Carnival game with a rack of dolls or cats where the customer has to throw a ball and knock them down, another type of build-up game
Rag Merchants:	Independents who sell t-shirts and other clothing
Razzle Game:	Money game (illegal in most towns) impossible or nearly

impossible to win, run by veteran agents, that is essentially a gambling game dependent upon the agent's ability to razzle the mooches out of large sums of money

Ride guys:	Ride workers (also called "monkeys" by non-ride guys as a term of disparagement)
<i>Royalty</i>	The name I gave to the carnival bosses (and when I used it with the other carnival workers, they knew immediately whom I was talking about)
Scratch:	Money
Screw:	To leave the show (as in "He screwed off.")
Shake:	The degree to which a ride produces good ground scores (as in "The Zipper's a good shake")
Show:	The carnival (as in "I'm with the show") (also in Hautzinger 1990)
Showmen:	Carnival owners
Splits:	The splitting of the carnival into two or more sections to play more than one spot at the same time
Spot:	Location/town where the carnival plays
Stick joints:	Joints that were built of wooden planks and canvas awnings
Stuffies:	Stuffed animals/toys used as prizes in game joints
Teardown:	Procedure of dismantling the rides and games after the last night (in Hautzinger 1990); also refers to the clothes that the ride guys don for teardown (e.g. show t-shirts taken off; grubby clothing/sweat pants put on)
Trailer Game:	Game mounted permanently on a trailer, usually aluminum, with electricity (lights)
Trap:	Game joint (also known as "trap store")
Walkaways:	Change left by ticket-purchasing customers that ticket-sellers kept

APPENDIX A

SULLIVAN AMUSEMENTS PERSONNEL¹³⁸ AND THEIR JOBS

Alan - independent ride owner; Cassie's partner¹³⁹; Lynn's cousin
Albert - joint line supervisor
Annette - mostly "invisible" partner of Sparky
Arty - ride guy
Barry - joint owner
Bob - my haunted house working partner
Britney - ticket seller/floss chick; Martin's partner
Bucky - ride guy
Butch - Ron Sullivan's "old farts" bodyguard
Cameron - joint line supervisor
Candice - ticket seller
Cassie - Alan's partner
Cece - joint line supervisor
Chuck - independent novelty joint owner
Claire - Gary's partner
Colin - money wheel joint worker; Moira's brother
Crystal - ticket seller/floss chick
Cynthia - office worker; Scott's partner
Deirdre and Jake - partners and co-owners of pony rides
Dennis - former joint bum
Dwayne - ride guy
Dwight - lot man; Alan's brother; Lynn's cousin
Frank - electrician; Moira's partner
Fred and Christina - partners and co-owners of the Pie Car and a joint line
Gary - joint line owner
Geoff and Alana - partners; mechanic (Geoff) and co-owners of independent ride and food joint
Hank - razzle joint agent
Harry - P.R. man; Ron Sullivan's brother
Jack - ride guy
Jeremy and Anna - partners; co-owned food joint
Jesse - joint bum/agent
Jim - ride guy
John - lot superintendent
Kathy - joint bum

¹³⁸This is not a complete list of all Sullivan Amusements personnel; only people referred to in this thesis are on this list.

¹³⁹I use the term "partner" to refer to people's romantic partners.

APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

SULLIVAN AMUSEMENTS PERSONNEL AND THEIR JOBS (CONTINUED)

Keith - food joint worker
Kyle - joint bum; Liza's partner
Lance - ride guy
Leo - joint line co-owner with Matt
Liza - joint bum/ticket seller
Lynn - co-owner of Sullivan Amusements; partner of Ron Sullivan; mother of Paul Sullivan
Malcolm - joint bum
Marcus - lot superintendent at North Dakota carnival
Martin - electrician; Britney's partner
Matt - joint line co-owner with Leo
Michael - independent joint worker
Moirra - Frank's partner; worked on money games; co-owned independent ride with Frank
Morris - ride guy
Neil - owner of several rides
Norm - independent joint owner
Paul - son of Ron and Lynn Sullivan; Rachel's partner
Penny - independent owner of fake bronco-ride/photography/popcorn joint
Pete - ride guy/foreman of kiddy rides
Peter - joint bum
Rachel - office worker/administrator; Paul's partner
Rick - Paul's right-hand man; co-owns haunted house with Paul
Roger - ride guy
Ron - owner of Sullivan Amusements; Lynn's partner; Paul's father
Ross - independent food joint owner
Roy - joint bum/agent
Sam - ride guy
Scott - welder; Cynthia's partner
Shania - ticket seller
Sparky - joint owner; Annette's partner
Susan - Neil's partner
Ted - ride guy
Teresa - joint bum
Tommy - ride guy
Vic - ride guy
Vinny - ride guy

APPENDIX B
APPLICATION FORM
(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ POSTAL CODE: _____

S.I.N. # _____ PHONE: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ MALE/FEMALE _____

DO YOU HAVE A CLASS # 1 DRIVERS LICENCE:

D/L # _____ PROVINCE
OBTAINED _____

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE EMPLOYMENT PACKAGE.

FIRST DAY WORKED: _____

LAST DAY WORKED: _____

REASON FOR LEAVING:

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE PAY IS BASED ON A BI-WEEKLY WAGE. ALSO LET IT BE UNDERSTOOD THAT YOU ARE PAID FOR THE HOURS WORKED ONLY. YOU ARE NOT PAID FOR TIME OFF SUCH AS LUNCH OR DINNER BREAKS. I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE EMPLOYMENT PACKAGE AND ALSO UNDERSTAND.

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

[And on two more separate sheets, the following:]

I, an employee of Sullivan Amusements Ltd. agree to let the company with hold [sic] my income tax and not remit as I have borrowed monies and agree to pay it back in lieu of my tax deduction. I also agree that this will show on my T-4 slip issued in February and I am fully aware that this will alter my Tax return, and I am responsible to remit any difference to the Tax department if I owe it.

SIGNED: _____

S.I.N. # _____

S.I.N. # _____

[sic] _____

I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS SULLIVAN AMUSEMENTS LTD. DECISION WHETHER I CAN TAKE AN ADVANCE EVERY DAY OR NOT. I AGREE TO THE HOURS WORKED AND I ALSO HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT I AM NOT ALLOWED TO DRINK OR PARTAKE IN DRUGS WHILE WORKING FOR SULLIVAN AMUSEMENTS LTD. OR I WILL BE FIRED IMMEDIATELY WITH NO NOTICE. MY BREAKS DURING THE DAY ARE NOT PAID FOR, THEREFORE I MAY LEAVE THE MIDWAY AREA ONLY IF I AM NOT WEARING ANY UNIFORMS THAT READ SULLIVAN AMUSEMENTS LTD. THE SHIRT AND HAT MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES DURING THE OPERATION OF MY PIECE OF EQUIPMENT TO IDENTIFY THAT I AM STAFF. I HAVE READ THE ABOVE AND IT HAS BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME SO THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO MISUNDERSTANDING.

NAME: _____

S.S.# _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Background Information:

1. What is your name?
2. What is your date of birth?
3. Are you male or female?
4. Where were you born?
5. What is your ethnic origin (nationality)?
6. What is your educational level? (Please indicate last grade completed in secondary school, as well as any post-secondary training/schooling.)
7. What are your parents' educational levels?
8. What kinds of jobs have your parents done (or continue to do)?
9. Do you have a wife/husband/children (for children, please give age(s))?
10. If yes, where do they live?
11. If yes, what kind of work do they do?
12. Where do you live during the off-season?

B. Carnival Work Information:

1. How many years have you worked for this carnival? Other carnivals?
2. How did you learn about/acquire the job at the carnival?
3. What is your job at the carnival?
4. Have you done other jobs at the carnival? If yes, what are they?
5. What kind of work did you do before joining the carnival?
6. Do you have other job opportunities?
7. If you had other job opportunities, would you continue to work at the carnival?
8. How long do you expect to work for the carnival?
9. What kind of work would you like to be doing five years from now?
10. Do you work during the off-season?
11. If yes, what kind of work do you do during the off-season?
12. If no, how do you support yourself during the off-season?

C. Carnival Lifestyle Information:

1. What do you think about the travelling?
2. What do you think about the living conditions? Where do you sleep in the carnival? How do you travel between spots? Please include any comments you wish to make about the living conditions of others in the carnival.
3. What do you think about the wages?
4. What do you think about the working conditions? (E.g. hours of work, weather conditions, safety issues, etc.) Please include any comments you wish to make about the working conditions of others in the carnival.
5. What do you think about the social life? Indicate what you do during your non-work time in the carnival. Please include any comments you wish to make about the social life of others in the carnival.

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

6. What do you think about personal relationships in the carnival? (E.g. friendships, romantic relationships)
7. Do you miss your friends/family members when you are travelling with the carnival?
8. What do you think about the overall lifestyle of being a carnival worker (include any comments you may wish to make about showers, toilets, food/meal availability)?
9. Do you think that working in the carnival is exciting or adventurous?
10. Please add anything else that you would like to tell me about working for the carnival that the questions above might not have included.

APPENDIX D

Memorandum of Agreement

Made in duplicate this 21¹⁴⁰ day of *Feb*, 1990.

Between

Sullivan Amusements Ltd.

Party of the First Part,
(Herein called **The Lessee**)

- and - *[B.C. town] Fall Fair*

Party of the Second Part,
(Herein called **The Lessor**)

WHEREAS the Lessee is possessed of equipment and chattels for Midway attractions at Fairs, Exhibitions, Rodeos, Stampedes, etc., consisting of rides, shows, games, novelty stands, food booths and other similar concession stands pertaining to the operation of a Carnival or Midway, hereinafter called the Midway Attractions.

AND WHEREAS the Lessor is conducting a *Fall Fair* at *[B.C. town] Fair Grounds* on *Aug. 31 - Sept 3, 1990*, and hereinafter called the Event.

AND WHEREAS the Lessee has applied to the Lessor for the sole and exclusive right to supply and operate all the said Midway Attractions at the said Event.

NOW THEREFORE the Lessee and Lessor agree as follows:

1. The Lessor hereby grants to the Lessee the sole and exclusive right to supply and operate all the said Midway Attractions at the said Event during the aforementioned dates.
2. The Lessor agrees to supply ground space for the Midway Attractions, which shall be suitable in size, condition and location, and agreeable to the Lessee.
3. The Lessor agrees to not suffer or permit the operation of a like or similar nature to that operated by the Lessee, in whole or part, by anyone other than the Lessee at the said Event.
4. The Lessor agrees to not suffer or permit the operation of a like or similar type Midway Attractions [sic] within the limits of the above named town (village, city) 30 days prior to, during, and 30 days after the said Event.
5. In the event of the Lessor, or his agents supplying any form of entertainment, at or within the grounds of the said Event, the Lessor agrees to have an intermission period of not less than ____ minutes at a time starting ____ hours after the start of the afternoon performance, and the evening performance, if held, shall not be more than ____ hours duration.

¹⁴⁰I have italicized those portions that are hand-written. Note, therefore, that this is a pre-printed form created, presumably, by Sullivan Amusements.

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

6. The Lessee agrees to supply all the Midway Attractions, and the operation of the same, at the said Event, on the aforementioned dates.
7. The Lessor reserves the right to allow the operation of food or eating booths that are located permanently at the said Event, by charitable organizations, Church groups, or service clubs.
8. It is understood and agreed between the Lessor and Lessee that in the event of flood, fire, inclement weather, impassable road or other travel conditions, or any other act of nature or disaster beyond the control of the parties named herein, this agreement shall be null and void and neither party shall have any claim against the other.
9. Now in consideration of being granted the aforementioned sole and exclusive rights to supply and operate the said Midway Attractions, and for any local permits or licenses required for operation of same, and for the admission to the grounds of the said Event by the employees and agents of the Lessee, and their equipment and vehicles, the Lessee hereby agrees to pay to the Lessor an amount equal to the following:

Sullivan Amusements Ltd. agrees to pay a guarantee of \$2,000.00 or 20% of the ride gross, whichever is the greater.

SULLIVAN AMUSEMENTS LTD.

[B.C. TOWN] FALL FAIR

R. SULLIVAN

[SIGNATURE OF FAIR BOARD PRESIDENT]

APPENDIX E

Owners and Workers at Sullivan Amusements

*Ron and Lynn Sullivan*¹⁴¹ (owners of Sullivan Amusements and most rides)
Neil (owner of several rides)

Paul (in charge of all carnival operations, and son of Ron and Lynn Sullivan)
Rachel (in charge of the office and Paul's common-law partner)
(Rachel & Paul also co-own candy floss joint and money games)

Rick (co-owns Funhouse with Paul, and is Paul's friend and right-hand man)

Dwight (lays out the lot, has jewellery joint) (brother of Lynn Sullivan)

Harry (P.R. man) (brother of Ron Sullivan)
John (Lot Superintendent/Mechanic) (long-time friend of Ron Sullivan)
Gary (mid-size joint line owner)

Frank (electrician) who also owns a kiddy ride
Martin (electrician)
Scott (welder) whose partner, *Cynthia*, works in the office

Independents:

Alan (cousin of Lynn Sullivan) (owns two major rides)
Fred and Christine (own/run Pie Car; own joint line)
Matt (co-owns joint line with another man who has the other half running with another show, but they occasionally join together for big spots)
Gary (owns joint line) (is brother of Matt's co-owner above)
Sam (owns small joint line and is unofficial carnival drug supplier)
Geoff (mechanic) and *Alana* (own/run large kiddy ride, and food joint)¹⁴²
David and Mary (own/run kiddy ride and burger food joint)
Ross (owns/runs food joint)

¹⁴¹The "royalty" that I refer to in this thesis was comprised of everyone from Ron and Lynn Sullivan down to and including Gary, a joint line owner, meaning that they wielded the most power in terms of decision-making and also that they lived in the most pleasant quarters.

¹⁴²Geoff used to be Lynn Sullivan's car mechanic in the town where the Sullivans owned their home: Lynn convinced Geoff to quit his job and come to work for them. She gave them the food joint (which transaction was a source of much hostility between several groups of people who claimed they had prior rights to this food joint).

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Independents (continued)

Chuck (owns/runs novelty joint) (long-time carnival worker, since the 1950's; close personal friend of Ron Sullivan)

Jeremy and Anna (own/run fish and chip joint)

Norm (owns/runs palm-reading/"psychic" joint)

Keith (owns/runs burger food joint)

Michael (runs laser joint which is owned by someone outside the carnival)

Deirdre and Jake (own/run pony rides)

Penny (owns/runs fake bronco-riding/photography, & popcorn joint) (Deirdre's sister)

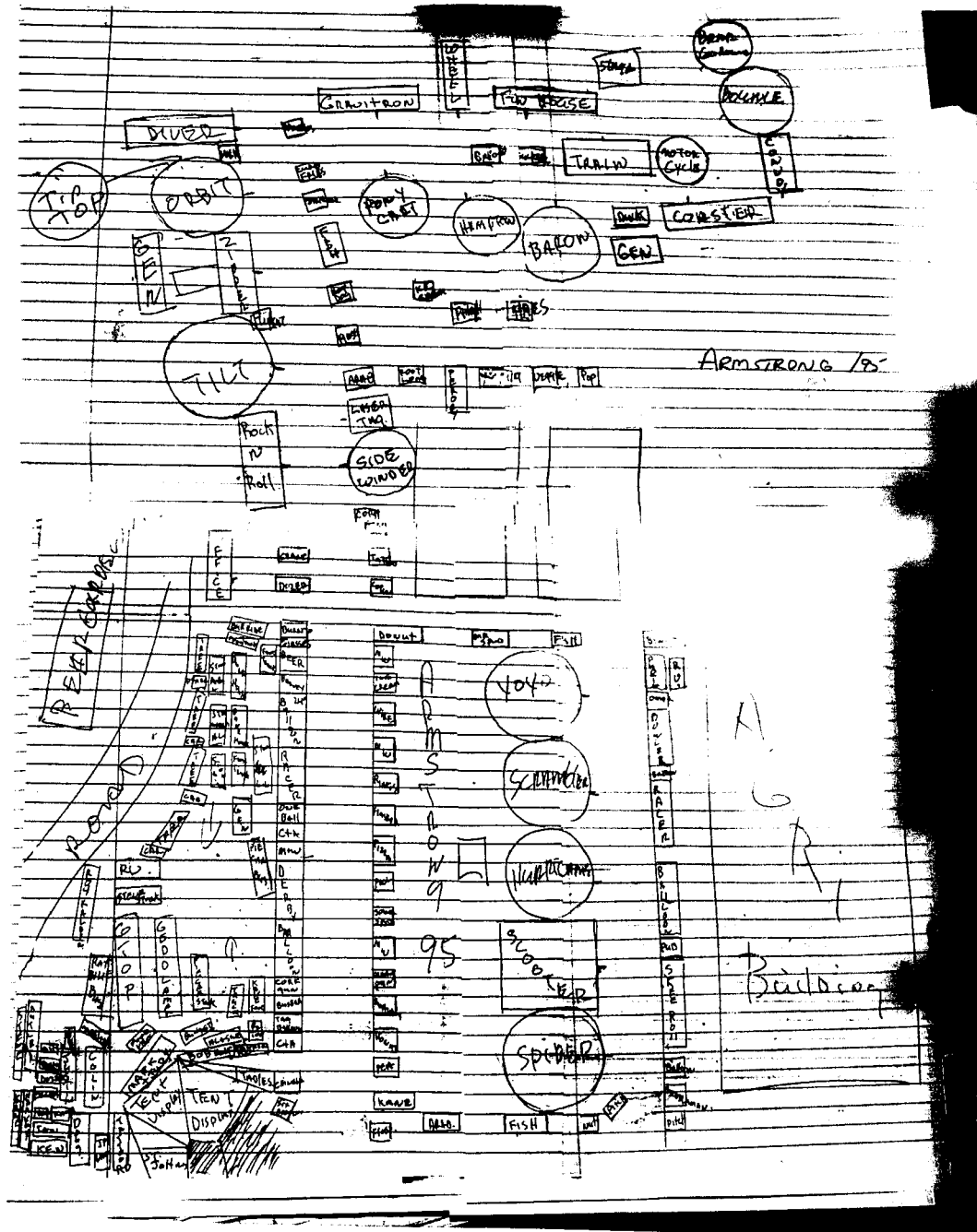
Ticket Sellers (4 - 6) (no ownership)

Ride Guys (35 - 50) (no ownership)

Joint Bums (varied tremendously: very approximately 75) (no ownership)

APPENDIX F

LAYOUT AT LARGE CARNIVAL LOT AT AN AGRICULTURAL FAIR



APPENDIX G

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Although the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans provides for the confidentiality of research information, it also points out that there are exceptions, as follows:

Compelling and specifically identified public interests, for example, the protection of health, life and safety, may justify infringement of privacy and confidentiality. Laws compelling mandatory reporting of child abuse, sexually transmitted diseases or intent to murder are grounded on such reasoning; so too are laws and regulations that protect whistle-blowers (Section 3.1)

Regarding the alleged pedophilic behaviour described in Chapter Six of this thesis, I initially did not believe that what I had been told was necessarily true.

Rumours were rampant in the carnival (e.g. the rumour that I was an undercover police officer) and I was always careful to look for corroborating evidence, before making any conclusions about the veracity of such knowledge. In the case of the alleged pedophile, it was not until after the nine-year old boy and his family had left Sullivan Amusements that even more people told me about the relationship. I also had no concrete evidence (i.e. *first-hand accounts*) of the man's alleged practice of paying young male joint bums for sexual services.

Furthermore, as I delved further and further into the carnival culture, I found that the entire structure of the carnival was predicated on a myriad of illegal activities, as I explain in this thesis. If I had reported to authorities all cases of drug use, drug transactions, sexually-transmitted diseases, robberies, assaults and what might be considered white collar crimes on the part of the carnival owners, I would have been placing my own health and safety at serious risk, as well as destroying

the trust necessary to conduct such sensitive research. I concluded, therefore, that it was more important for me to remain in the culture, protect the sources of my information, and keep my safety intact in order to complete the research. However, these are often very difficult decisions that a researcher may face, when conducting in-depth ethnographic research.