Girls' Resilience: Negotiating Power Through Discourses of Community, Gender, Success & Space

Valerie L. M. Billard

Saint Mary's University

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Approved: Dr. Sandra Bell
Associate Professor, Department
Sociology & Criminology

Approved: Dr. Russell Westhaver
Associate Professor, Department
Sociology & Criminology

Approved: Dr. Marion Brown
Associate Professor, Department
Social Work

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GIRLS' REILIENCE: NEGOTIATING POWER THROUGH DISCOURSES OF COMMUNITY, GENDER, SUCCESS & SPACE

by Val Billard

Abstract

Media representations and public discourse about girls' violence and delinquency has presented marginalized, urban girls from disadvantaged communities as *risked*, *vulnerable* and *deviant*. These images problematically masculinize girls and fail to recognize the social milieu of their resilience and this has largely influenced the way girls are offered programming. This thesis examines girls' resilience in ways that recognize strength in the context of classed, raced and gendered resistance. Through art-making, photography and focus group discussions with nine girls, aged 11 and 12, this research found that both femininity and community are flexible and negotiated sources of power for girls that together show signs of resilience.

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Introduction

"TRYING TO MAKE A WAY OUT OF NO WAY IS SOMETIMES THE ONLY WAY"

-Quote by Johnnetta B. Cole, former president of Spelman College for African American women

Girls behaviour is socially evaluated in a two dimensional way, as either good or bad. Good or bad labels are often determined in light of prescriptive gender norms, social class, race and the kind of community girls reside. Rarely are girls social realities deconstructed, especially marginalized girls, in a way that explores their strengths in what has been socially determined as bad or risked. The quote above by Johnnetta B. Cole particularly relates to the point made here that the strength of marginalized girls is largely absent in social discourse and there is significance in understanding how girls make a way out of no way.

Recent media stories have done a good job of decontextualizing delinquency and violence by girls from disadvantaged communities. Locally we are hearing that frequently girls, particularly urban and marginalized, beat seniors with table legs and torture as well as beat other girls[1]. We should all apparently fear the ethnic girl from low income urban communities because she is dangerous; she is a walking time bomb. This point is made ever so clear in Rachel Simmons (2002) book *Odd Girl Out*; she claims that for girls, "where economic struggle and disenfranchisement prevail, self-assertion and aggression

[1] "Girls handed a year sentence in custody for table-leg beating of senior..." (The Chronicle Herald 2008:A1), "No bail for girl, 14, charged in attack behind school" (The Daily News 2007:6), "Girl pleads guilty to torture, beating of another girl" (Cape Breton Post 2007:A7).

become as much a part of the social landscape as playgrounds and ice-cream trucks" (P. 177).

Other "experts" like James Garbarino (2006) make claims that delinquency and particularly, violence, is masculine and that as girls become liberated they also become more masculine (Bell 2008; Landry 2006). In his book *See Jane Hit*, Garbarino (2006) claims that research supports his view that girls who embrace traditional femininity are not as resilient as girls who adopt both feminine and masculine traits. He argues: "unleashing girls to be fully human rather than narrowly feminine promises to be a positive factor in their development…" (P. 68). Apparently, according to Garbarino girls were not fully human before the women's movement and that the *liberation* following it allowed girls to be out on the street and *acting like boys*.

While these kinds of assertions about girls are common place on televisions, radios, newspapers and promoted by some talk shows, there are negative repercussion for marginalized girls, when they are viewed and treated as *risked*. Bell (2007) contends that: "as we enter the 21st century, we find ourselves in an era of 'crime prevention' discourse, not treatment and rehabilitation, and we talk about 'at-risk youth', 'resiliency', and 'protective factors'" (P. 349). In the crime prevention framework, risk assessment is the dominant tool and concept to build on for intervening potential offending (Worrall 2001; Farrington 2006, Schneider 2007). In this context, the welfare model for dealing with "troubled girls" has been replaced with what Worrall (2001) calls actuarial language. Actuarial language is the governing of girls within the justice system and through social discourse the same way boys have been categorized and managed (Worrall 2001:86). For example, girls are being categorized as 'violent girls' or 'drug abusing girls' and as such

are treated as "high risk" (Worrall 2001). Thus, girls who engage in violence and delinquency are treated harshly in society and by the justice system, and their needs remain unmet (Worrall 2001; Schaffner 2006; Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens 2008). An overarching problem is then, instead of seeking to understand the meaning and context of strength and resilience for marginalized girls, they are often designated as *risked*, *vulnerable*, *deviant* and *dangerous*.

After conducting my undergraduate research on girls' violence in social housing with five girls, some of their responses concerning the context of their fighting activities left me asking question beyond the content of my honours thesis. The girls had indicated that fights between girls often happened at the recreation centre in their community during boys' night hoops, leading me to preliminarily question if perhaps girls' violence is a way for them to cope with their every day realities given their lack of programming. In exploring the girls' violence literature, it occurred to me that almost absent from this arena of literature is an exploration of girls resilience. My initial questions guiding my literature search were: what is girls' resilience and can fighting be a way for girls to be resilient. Consequently, these questions lead me to my current research project about girls' resilience in disadvantaged communities.

Chapter one highlights the development of the theoretical lens I use to analyze and interpret girls resistance as a process of resilience. This chapter begins by examining the development of resilience research in the social sciences and how criminology adopted and utilizes the concept of resilience in delinquency prevention. This leads to a discussion about how the definition of resilience is problematic for an understanding of girls' behaviour because of its central focus on risk. Drawing on feminist work that advocates

for gender-responsive programming, I show how risk is re-conceptualized as structural disadvantages to explain girls' resistance to these various marginalities. I then, show that this re-contextualization of risk is problematic for understanding girls' resistance because the end result is girls proclaimed as victims/ survivors and an individualization of social inequalities. Drawing on Ungar's work that reframes resistance as a process of resilience, I argue that this approach allows for an exploration of the girls resistance literature that asks productive questions for understanding their resilience.

Chapter two begins with a discussion of the feminist literature that highlights the development of resistance in disadvantaged communities and pointing to issues of theory and epistemology. Most problematic in this literature is the assumption that resistance and social disadvantage is gender neutral, thus, connecting girls' resistance to "liberation". Therefore, this thesis draws primarily on feminist work identifying gender differences in community, class and race, as well as work identifying differences within girl culture. Here, I examine the different readings of girls' resistance in relation to gendered power, community, success and programming. The analysis and discussion in this chapter raises an important research question about girls' resilience: How do girls from disadvantaged neighbourhoods negotiate discourses of femininity and community to be resilient?

Chapter three outlines my epistemological philosophy and methodology for exploring my research questions with girls. The chapter begins with a discussion concerning issues using the feminist standpoint approach and its origin as a "talk" paradigm. Drawing on performative epistemologies, I make an argument for integrating both standpoint and performative approaches to explore the views of girls employing "creative methodologies". From there, I introduce the nine girls who participated in the

research and discuss the specific methods guiding the research and recruitment process. Toward the end of this chapter, methodological issues that rose out of the research are discussed in relation to my position in the research.

The findings from discussions and art-making with the girls are outlined in four chapters, four, five, six and seven. Chapter four outlines my descriptive findings and how I thematically interpreted the data from each focus group involving community, success, gendered social power and programming. Themes are further interpreted and analyzed in chapter five and six. Chapter five outlines my analysis and interpretation of the girls understanding and experience of community and the context of risk within their communities. Particularly, this chapter highlights the girls understanding of community as supportive networks and their perceptions of risk as involving power struggles concerning adults, girls and boys. Chapter six outlines my analysis and interpretation of the girls understanding of resilience, where themes of community and power struggles are re-examined in the context of resilience. This chapter also involves an analysis of the girls' views about cultural notions of success, femininity and programming in terms of their perceptions of resilience. The final chapter is a discussion about my findings in comparison to the literature and important implications of these findings.

Part 1: Conceptualizing the Project

Chapter One

Conceptual Prelude: Reframing Resistance as a Process of Resilience

In order to explore the concept of resilience as it relates to my research on girls resilience, I first discuss the development of resilience research. Then, I introduce how its definition is problematic for an understanding of girls' behaviour because of the interrelation between resilience and conceptualizations of risk. Next, I provide a background to the development of the risk concept in delinquency prevention research and highlight how it is problematic for understanding girls. Then, from an analysis and discussion of the gender-responsive literature, I am able to show how risks are positioned as structural disadvantages that call for resistance and are sometimes imperfect strategies girls engage in to cope with disadvantage that are framed in larger social discourses[2] as delinquency. I also point out how this concept of resistance is problematic in understanding girls' resilience. Finally, drawing on Ungar's reframing of resistance within processes of resilience; I argue that this approach allows an exploration of the girls' resistance literature that asks more productive questions for understanding girls' resilience.

Resilience Research in Context

Youth resilience emerged out of research examining risk factors by developmental psychologists and psychiatrists in the 1970s, who recognized that some of the young people in their studies *thrived* despite the adversities they faced (Masten 2001; Anthony

[2] I use Bell's (2012) definition of discourse which means: "how things are talked about and understood, both orally and in written form, including formal talk, such as theory; professional talk, such as reports, books, and media; and conversations" (P.403).

1987; Garmezy 1994; Masten, Best, & Garmezy 1990; Murphy & Moriarv 1976; Rutter 1979; Werner & Smith 1982; Waller 2001). Numerous researchers, thereafter, recognized resilience as a reoccurring theme (Waller 2001), thus, initiated an interest in resilience among researchers and practitioners. The logic of understanding resilience for these pioneers was that learning how young people are resilient could inform theories of etiology and guide intervention as well as policy (Masten 2001; Anthony 1974; Garmezy 1971; Rutter 1979; Werner & Smith 1982). Initially, youth resilience was conceptualized by psychologists and psychiatrists as a personal trait (Waller 2001; Masten 2001; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker 2000), but as research in the field grew, by the 1980's ecological views of resilience emerged (Waller 2001; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker 2001).

Resilience understood in an ecological framework is currently examined in a number of disciplines such as social work (Heinonen & Spearman 2001; Waller 2001; Smith-Osbourne 2007), education (Kennedy & Bennett 2006; Bullen & Kenway 2005), and criminology (Schneider 2007). The ecological model assumes there is a "connection between interacting elements" and relies on the "person-in-the-environment" perspective (Heinonen and Spearman 2001:186). In other words, risk and resilience can appear from both external as well as internal influences as multi-layered concepts (Waller 2001). In light of this shift to an ecological model, resilience research has expanded across disciplines in different capacities with a specific interest in youth development and intervention (Fraser 2004). As a result, resilience research is interdisciplinary and draws from multiple fields.

Resilience is a key concept in the delinquency prevention literature because it is the *desired outcome* in research-informed programming that target youth at-risk of delinquency (Farrington 2006; Schneider 2007; Hawkins 1999, 2006). Resilience is often conceptualized as: "positive adaptation or outcomes" (Hawkins 2006; Schneider 2007), "successful coping with risk and adversity" (McKnight & Loper 2002; Greene, Peters and associates 2009), "the ability to withstand negative forces" (Schneider 2007), and "protective factors that decrease chances of offending" (Farrington 2006). According to these definitions resilience requires there to be some kind of risk or adversity present that youth overcome (Masten 2001; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker 2000). Definitions of youth resilience such as these are problematic because they assume all youth will experience similar risks and resilience, while differences among youth, especially gender, are not accounted for.

Girls' resilience remains largely under-explored in delinquency prevention literature because conceptualizations are gender neutral. Employing resilience as gender neutral is problematic for understanding girls' behaviour because important meanings underlying success and risk are often defined through research conducted with boys. As a result, feminist researchers who examine girls delinquency argue that risk is structurally different for girls (Miller & Mullins 2009; Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens 2008), and their work moves toward an understanding of resistance instead of resilience drawing on empowerment as the favourable outcome for at risk girls.

During the 1990s, government had called for implementing effective delinquency prevention programs for at risk youth (Krisberg 2005; Schaffner 2006; Hawkins 1999; Reitsma-Street 1999, 2004). This meant that governments wanted to allot monies only to

evidence-based youth prevention programs that demonstrated a reduction impact on delinquency. This move toward evidence-based programming influenced delinquency prevention models became dominated by longitudinal studies about boys (Hawkins 1999, 2006). David Hawkins and Richard Catalano's social development model became the influential approach to youth prevention programming (Krisberg 2005; Farrington 2006). Hawkins and Catalano's model combined health promotion concepts of risk and protective factors with delinquency theories from longitudinal research conducted on boys (Krisberg 2005; Hawkins 1999, 2006). Their model is otherwise known as risk-focussed prevention (Farrington 2006). Risk-focussed prevention can be summed up as a model that identifies risk factors that can cause offending and identifies protective factors against offending. Programming of this nature is meant to counteract risks and enhance protective factors (Farrington 2006; Schneider 2007).

Risk-focussed prevention is important because it has a specific way of defining risk. For instance, Farrington (2006) defines risk as "prior factors that increase the risk of occurrence of the onset, frequency, persistence and duration of offending" (P. 5). Risk factors are drawn from community, school, family and individual/peer information and are informed by criminological theories of social bonds, strain, learning and differential association (Catalano, Park, Harachi, Haggerty, Abbott & Hawkins 2008; Hawkins 1999, 2006; Schneider 2007). The behaviors deemed at risk are substance abuse, delinquency, school dropout, violence and teenage pregnancy (Krisberg 2005). Although teenage pregnancy is regarded as putting a girl at risk, there are no other 'variables' specifically relating to girls situations, circumstances and life changes. Farrington (2006, 2007) argues

that because gender and race is not something that can be changed, these factors are excluded from risk-focussed prevention.

Through this delinquency prevention orientation, the need for evidence-based girls programming emerged as well as feminist theorizing of girls' delinquency and resistance (Schaffner 2006; Chesney-Lind & Irwin 2008; Reitsma-Street 1999, 2004). While feminist researchers have not specifically addressed the exclusion of gender in Hawkins and Catalano's model, they argue that using boys' theories to explain girls' delinquency is not adequate (Joe & Chesney-Lind 1995; Chesney-Lind 1989; Miller 1998; Miller & Mullins 2009; Schaffner 2006). Hence, Irwin and Chesney-Lind (2008) contend that: "one historic by-product of the universal and male-centred theories of delinquency is the masculinisation of delinquency prevention and intervention services and glaring lack of services for girls" (P. 849). Furthermore, feminist researchers have furiously critiqued the existing state of policy. Some of those critiques have drawn attention to girls programming as being sadly reduced to an equivalence of: urinals being removed and walls painted pink (Krisberg 2005; Mathews & Hubbard 2008), or girls subjected to *throwaway services* (Wells 1994), meaning services formed for boys but deemed not useful and then repackaged for girls. Motivated by these kinds of critiques, gender-responsive research and programming was established to address the needs of girls (Schaffner 2006; Foley 2008; Chesney-Lind & Irwin 2008).

Although delinquency prevention researchers now rely heavily on longitudinal research, gender-responsive researchers most often engage in a gendered pathways approach to inform prevention. Daly (1998) suggests the gendered pathways approach emphasizes "biographical elements, life-course trajectories and developmental

sequences" (P. 97). The gendered pathways approach is about understanding girls and women's life experiences that brought them to offend or desist from crime and delinquency (Miller & Mullins 2009; Belknap 2007; Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph 2002). What is important about gendered pathways to prevention programming is its methodological and theoretical dualism that emphasizes the *blurred boundaries* between victimization and delinquency (Miller & Mullins 2009).

Working within a gendered pathways approach, researchers give weight to girls' life experiences through a developmental biography. Although a focus on girls' development is historically rooted in developmental psychology, a sociological perspective opens the door for a more in-depth understanding of social structure and gender norms. Psychologist, Carol Gilligan's work, for example, has had an impact on early recommendations for gender-responsive programming and some of her work offers theorizations of resistance (Greene, Peters and associates 1998). Gilligan's work, however, is largely individual and psychological and does not explain the structural risks and resistance of lower class, ethnic girls (Goodkind 2005). In this sense, Miller and Mullins (2009) point out: "feminist criminologists examine the role that gender inequality plays in shaping girls risks for delinquency, as well as how gender inequality effects the nature of girls delinquent activities" (P. 30). They also suggest part of the work examining girls' risks for delinquency is looking at the interconnection between gender inequity and class, race as well as age.

Girls Structural Risks & Resistance

Looking more closely, feminist criminologists have defined risk for girls as "concern for understanding the detrimental social conditions that effect young women's lives" (Miller 2001:213). Furthermore, Schaffner (2006) explains using the term 'at risk' for girls implies that: "we tend to protect society from boys, protect girls from society, and truly empower and protect neither" (P. 36). Risk, in this sense, is a reflection of girls' needs, which means their *interconnected troubles*, such as access to resources, living in poverty, gender inequality, racial stereotypes, and victimization (Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens 2008; Hannah-Moffat 1999).

Girls who experience a lack of resources try to find ways to survive and have been characterized by feminist researchers as resistant. Hence, resistance is defined as: "strategies to manage risk" (Miller 2008), "coping mechanisms" (Schaffner 2007), and "skills to survive" (Joe & Chesney-Lind 1995). This literature points out that these coping strategies are sometimes viewed as, "deviate[ing] from acceptable social norms" (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind & Koo 2001). Feminist scholars argue that girls who deviate from acceptable norms are viewed as at risk, but they are not 'risked'; they are resistant to norms that constrict and limit them (Resitsma-Street 1999; Laidler & Hunt 2001; Miller 2002; Worrall 2004; Alder & Worrall 2004).

In this literature, then, resistance represents the way girls negotiate their needs given limited structural resources and is often referred to as survival resistance. To clarify, negotiate in this sense represents a process of considering and making compromises between social prescriptions and the reality of structural disadvantages girls face. Viewed in this way, girls risks are defined as their unmet needs that call for resistance. That is not to say that a girl who lives in poverty and shoplifts to meet her

needs is engaging in resistance. The issue is much larger in that the literature points to overarching structural issues (such as poverty) that lead girls to be vulnerable to other troubles (Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens 2008). For example, a girl may need to stay safe in her community marked by poverty and violence, and to do that she may construct herself as tough to keep people from terrorizing her. In constructing herself as tough she may fight with others to establish that reputation. In this sense, girls are working imperfectly on making their world better for themselves by resisting their imperfect social conditions.

While the feminist resistance literature is helpful in understanding structural and hierarchal issues in girls lives, its origin is in the pathways approach and attention is exclusively drawn to victimization. Goodkind (2005) points out the serious problem in focusing on victimization. She argues:

> I question the use of the word *victim*. Portraying girls as victims frames them passively and, by drawing attention away from the fact that girls continue to be punished for behavior that is deemed more acceptable among boys, perpetuates the gendered double standard and the false dichotomy of victim-slut. Although the victimization that many girls have experienced may be a salient factor in their lives, girls' sole identity is as neither victims nor survivors; in other words, they should not be defined by their experiences of abuse (P. 64).

When risks for offending is seen through a lens of victimization, experiences of abuse then become a means to classify girls on a scale of risk and this disempowers girls who may want change (Goodkind 2005). Hence, in the feminist resistance literature, gender-responsive programming is the goal and objective to promote positive change through empowerment that also addresses structural inequities (Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens 2008; Schaffner 2006; Batchelor 2005).

While Schaffner (2006) explains that understanding the empowerment paradigm requires "identifying the power(s) that the powerful have that advocates would like to empower young woman with" (P. 180), Goodkind (2005) points out that the meaning of empowerment often becomes individualized as opposed to being collective, thus putting onus back on girls for their social inequality (Yong 1994; Fullwood 2001). She argues:

> recommendations for gender-specific services focus primarily on individualized programs to the exclusion of attention to larger systemic problems, such as the continued institutionalization of status offenders, the overrepresentation of girls of color, and the general overprocessing of youths who could be better served in less punitive and less controlling settings. Although many have cited social and environmental factors as causes of girls' delinquency, they have not included addressing these factors as part of the solution. (Goodkind 2005:61)

In this way, the notion that girls are resistant is an improvement from labelling girls as risked; however, the end result in programming recommendations most often focuses on changing individual girls. Focusing on individual girls, then, merely avoids structural inequities and falls into a tautology of risk that is not conducive to prevention programming. Ultimately, conceptualizing girls' imperfect coping mechanisms as resistance and simply leaving it at that, short hands our understanding of any positive function resistance might offer.

Reshaping Girls Resistance as Resilience

In light of the issues present in the feminist literature, work by Michael Ungar offers a way to view resistance through a theoretical lens of resilience that avoids negative connotations and a tautology of risk. Ungar's work is similar to the feminist literature in that he argues young people's social location and access to resources provide a context for unconventional behaviour that can be viewed as resistance (Ungar

2004:356). Different from the feminist resistance literature, Ungar maintains that resistance can be a process of resilience for some young people and refers to this as hidden resilience. Instead of defining resilience in conventional terms simply as *success despite adversity* as does the delinquency prevention literature, Ungar (2004) suggests a much more beneficial way of looking at resilience. In Ungar's work, individuals define their own meaning of what resilience is within their everyday realities and based on their social conditions. Importantly, the everyday realities and social conditions of youth inform the context in which they encounter risk and these same conditions also inform how they are resilient.

Ungar (2004) argues that resilience cannot be a determined concept because existing research "cannot help in prediction of which specific high-risk child will survive and/or thrive and which will experience developmental and behavioural problems" (P. 343). Both the delinquency prevention and gender-responsive literature attempts to predict risk factors. The Gender-responsive literature, for example, largely defines victimization as a risk that generates resistance, but in Ungar's conceptualization of resilience, it cannot be determined if victimization will generate resistance or conventional behavior.

Ungar's (2004a) constructionist[3] approach provides flexibility in how resilience is defined. For Ungar (2004), resilience is a negotiated process between social location, which affects a person's access to resources and how a person defines their own success (Ungar 2005a, 2005b). Broadly, then, resilience is "the process of discursive

[3] Ungar (2004a) defines the constructionist approach as reflecting "a postmodern understanding of the construct that better accounts for cultural and contextual differences in how resilience is expressed by individuals, families and communities" (P. 341).

empowerment as a protective mechanism mediating the impact of risk factors, leading to self-definitions by high-risk youth as resilient" (Ungar 2004b:79). In approaching resilience this way, Ungar (2004) indicates there is room for discovering unnamed processes that are not defined in the literature in predictive ways. In the context of my research, Ungar's notion of resilience allows me to move away from predicatively defining resilience for girls and allows me to look at the moments in the resistance literature where questions about *hidden resilience* or *conventional resilience* may emerge for girls.

Unlike the delinquency prevention literature where resilience is most often defined in terms of the individual and personal traits (Farrington 2007; Schneider 2006), Ungar's work suggests that resilience is a collective process. He suggests: "people themselves frequently associate resilience with the context in which they live, their culture and the opportunities each brings for individuals and groups of individuals to experience themselves as resilient" (Ungar 2005a: 90). Cultural values embedded in various communities or collective groups impact the way each individual or group of individuals define their sense of resilience. Exploring individual's definitions of resilience will give insight to collective and cultural values found in various communities. Hence, community in this framework is about individual's who share similar cultural values, circumstances or social location.

Discussion

From the theoretical literature on delinquency prevention, girls are largely ignored in theories, research and programming. This same literature suggests that girls and boys

experience similar risk factors and thus, justifies using the same programming for girls that is designed for boys. In addition, delinquency prevention research often focuses on risk and assumes that if risks are identified and reduced will produce resilience. Strongly opposing this notion, feminist researchers argue for gender-responsive research and programming. Hence, the feminist literature moves away from the delinquency prevention literatures' concept of risk and resilience to reframe risk as unmet needs rising out of social disadvantage and a recognition of girls' imperfect coping mechanisms as resistance. Particularly problematic in this literature is how girls' resistance is framed to label her as a victim/ survivor and an individualization of disadvantage. Ungar's work, however, offers a way to conceptualize resistance within processes of resilience where no particular weight is given to risk or resilience and preconceived notions of risk or resilience become irrelevant. In this sense, resilience has the potential to be understood in terms of conventional or unconventional behaviors.

Chapter Two

Literature Review: Girls Resistance, Community and Resilience

This chapter highlights the literature on girls' resistance in street culture, beginning with early work that identified gendered similarities in delinquency among youth from disadvantaged communities. More recent research on girls resistance shifts to an examination of gender differences and draws attention to class, race and adaptable femininities. This literature positions non-passive femininity as resulting from victimization and suggests that violence is routinized in disadvantaged communities. Disadvantaged community is taken up in the literature to mean an isolated, segregated, urban inner-city pocket of residents who similarly experience poverty, unemployment, racialization, negative labelling, crime, violence as well as delinquency (Jones 2004; Anderson 1999; Joe & Chesney-Lind 1995), and in this way the disadvantaged community is a source of risk for girls. A small but important section of literature examines the possibility that disadvantaged communities offer some kind of resilience. This research links resistance to processes of resilience for girls which are rooted in perceptions about success. Finally, success is problematized because of its narrow discourses that clearly devalue girls who are raced and classed who are then subjected to programs geared toward achieving mainstream definitions of success.

Acknowledging Girls Participation in Neighbourhood-Street Culture

The absence of research on girls' resistances in disadvantaged communities until the 1980's is recognized by feminist criminologists as involving pervasive beliefs that

only boys occupied public space and engaged in subcultural resistance (Burman & Batchelor 2009; Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008; Joe & Chesney-Lind 1995; Ness 2004). Early girl culture research concerning resistance is highlighted by the work of McRobbie (McRobbie & Garber 2000). From her research during the 1970s, McRobbie found that girls traditionally spend their time in the domestic realm, while boys' culture takes place on the street (P. 14). As a result, traditional ideologies of girl culture claimed the "bedroom" as girls' sanctuaries, where they "read teeny bopper magazines and indulge in fantasies with their girlfriends about rock stars" (McRobbie 1997: 72). Girls in McRobbie's research resisted the limits of youth through bedroom culture that signifies domesticity and traditional notions of femininity, typically geared toward marriage and children.

By the 1980s, perspectives on boys and street culture began to position urban, inner-city disadvantage in terms of racialization and neoliberal politics (Wacquant 2001) as well as space where underground drug networks and violence were present (Blumstein 1995). As these issues became clear to researchers, urban, poor, inner-city neighbourhoods were viewed as 'hyper ghettos' (Venkatesh 2006) and participation in the 'streets' was theoretically positioned in terms of masculinity and violence (Anderson 1999; Bourgois 1996). Anderson's (1994) work contextualized this framework and offered a definition of street culture. Stewart and Simons (2010) summarize Anderson's meaning of street culture and point out that "he contends that street culture is an ecological concept that is an emergent property of structurally disadvantaged neighbourhoods and that it shapes values that influence violence among adolescence" (P.571). Furthermore, Oliver (2006) argues that street culture is a working and lower class

institution that provides "psychological and social needs" to disadvantaged black men where acceptance is generated by a "community tolerance for patterns of dysfunctional behaviour" (P.922).

Alongside this perspective, research on girls participation in street culture also developed during the 1980's (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008). Feminist subcultural researchers viewed girls' participation in street culture as challenging traditional gender norms (Bottrell 2008; McRobbie 1991; Campbell 1987; Carrington 1989, 1993). This led to a focus on various aspects of girls' violence and street culture (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008; Sommers & Baskin). Campbell (1981) found from interviews with incarcerated girls in UK's Borstal detention centre that girls viewed fighting in a positive light, and rejected the notion that fighting was "unfeminine". For Borstal girls, fighting was encouraged by parents and enhanced tough reputations in their communities (Campbell 1981:190). Campbell's (1984) later research with 64 gang girls in New York reiterated these same findings with regard to girls' reputation in street culture. Campbell's research set the tempo for recognizing girls' resistance to conventional notions of femininity as departing from earlier assumptions about bedroom culture. From her work, girls' resistance to risk and social disadvantage began to shape the way girls were viewed in street culture.

Campbell's work was followed by other academics concerned with gang girls and violence (Fishman 1988; Harris 1988; Moore 1991; Lauderback, Hansen &Waldorf 1992; Quicker 1993). Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) argue that these early ethnographies "document the impact of poverty, unemployment, deterioration, and violence in communities where these young women live. The girls share with boys in their

neighbourhoods the powerlessness and hopelessness of the urban underclass" (P. 413). From recognition that girls experience urban disadvantages such as poverty and violence in communities, researchers sought to explore processes of subcultural resistance among marginalized girls.

For example, Baskin and Sommers research with African American girls from New York extended the analysis to include street level social networks (Baskin, Sommers & Fagan 1993; Sommers & Baskin 1992, 1993, 1994). They found that the violent nature of girls' neighbourhoods was a significant reason for them to enact violence, thereby, participating in similar amounts of violence as boys. Sommers and Baskin explained girls participation in delinquent street culture in terms of what Irwin and Chesney-Lind (2008) argue that Sommers and Baskin's study reflects the "street liberation perspective"[4]. Street liberation involves "explain[ing] women's and girls' inner-city experiences using the same theoretical framework to explain men's hypermasculinity and violence" (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008: 841).

Sommers and Baskin (1998) drew specific explanations for girls violence in street culture from Elijah Anderson's "code of the street"[5], where they linked girls violence to codes of respect and social-economic marginalization. In this sense, girls' participation in violent street culture was viewed as being the same kind of resistance to social disadvantage as boys experience, thereby conceptualizing social disadvantage as gender

[4] The liberation perspective was developed by Freda Alder (1975) and Rita Simon (1975).

[5] Anderson (1999) explains that the code of the streets is "a set of prescriptions and proscriptions, or informal rules, of behaviour organised around a desperate search for respect that governs social relations, especially violence among many residents" (10). Anderson's notion of the code explains that men crave respect so much that they are willing to do anything for it (Jones 2008). Consequently, Miller and White (2004) point out that: "Anderson's (1999) code of the streets, heralded as one of the best contemporary works on inner-city violence, frames urban young women primarily as girlfriends, sexual partners, and teen mothers" (P. 167).

neutral. Other research has followed Sommers and Baskin's "street liberation" perspective (Simpson 1991; James, Johnson & Baghaven 2004; Batchelor 2005).

Sommers and Baskins theory is problematic in two ways. First, their theory suggests that girls are becoming more violent because of similar disadvantages as boys (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008). This liberation thesis has been largely discredited through research evidence that demonstrates girls lesser involvement in crime and violence than boys (Sprott & Doob 2003; Savoie 1999; Reitsma-Street 1999). Second, because social disadvantage is viewed as gender neutral, the importance of other inequalities between girls and boys in disadvantaged communities is downplayed or ignored (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008). While this early literature marks important trends in girls' participation and resistance in street culture, ignoring important structural disadvantages between girls and boys makes for problematic assumptions that risk and resistance are gender neutral. Contrary to gender neutral assumptions, other research suggests girls' resistance to social disadvantage and risk in disadvantaged communities involves processes of negotiating gender.

Gendered Power & Space in Street Culture

The literature recognizing gender power[6] differences suggests that femininity and masculinity are produced and reproduced on the street. For example, Connell (1987) suggests that on the street there exists a gender order that reflects, "a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of

[6] Power is intended to mean, "the ability of a person or group to force others to do what they wish" (Bell 2012:406)

femininity and masculinity" (P. 98). In this sense, understanding girls' delinquent resistance means recognizing the extent of gendered norms and expectations in girls' lives.

Recent research reframes the code of the street from masculine to gendered and indicates that girls negotiate patriarchal social relations in disadvantaged communities to find ways of being girls. Ness's (2004) ethnography of 100 girls living in disadvantaged communities in Philadelphia found that girls' resistance in these communities involved negotiations between femininity and violence. Ness (2004) argues "unlike middle-class girls who engage in physical fighting, girls who fight in West and Northeast Philly are not defying the feminine norms or other social expectations of their environs" (P. 37). Rather, Ness (2004) suggests that girls do not reject mainstream femininity; instead they alter femininity to fit their low-income, racialized status. The girls in Ness's research held feminine roles such as attending to their appearances and putting boys ahead of themselves, while also engaging in fighting to maintain respect. One of the girls in Ness's research sums it up when she says, "I can be cute yet still mess some girl up if that's what I have to do" (P. 44). Other research supports Ness (Jones 2004; Lopez & Luchuga 2007; Collins 2000), strengthening the argument that violence is "a means of achieving resilient femininities" (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008).

Building on *resilient* and *adaptable* femininities (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008), other work has extended this analysis to include intersections of gendered power and space. In this work, gendered power is materialized in spaces where femininity and masculinity are carried out. For instance, Laidler and Hunt (2001) found that San Francisco gang girls placed a high premium on respectability and this was associated with

appearances and avoidance of promiscuity. Laidler and Hunt's girls negotiated their femininity differently when in the presence of male gang members than with their 'home girls'. When at their friends' home, the girls could drink and drug freely with no worries. In the presence of boys they were careful and resisted drugs and alcohol to avoid sexual interactions with boys that would ruin their reputation as respectable. Furthermore, when girls were around the guy gang members they often carried out feminine tasks such as cooking and cleaning. For Laidler and Hunt, femininity is carefully negotiated by the limits of patriarchal power and male space. When in the same spaces as boy gang members the girls engaged in typical feminine roles and with their home girls they engaged in less hyperfeminine behaviors.

Consequently, Miller and White (2004) argue: "girls must gear their actions toward what they can safely accomplish or get away with in the context of male-dominated settings such as the streets" (P. 169). On the one hand, girls draw on norms about femininity to sometimes accomplish delinquent behaviors, such as selling drugs (Mahar and Daly 1995) or robbing people (Miller 1998). In these cases, traditional notions of femininity are used in ways that allow girls to, for instance, sell drugs because police would not suspect girls to engage in such behaviour (Mahar & Daly 1995), or rob people by pretending to be sexually available to boys or aggressive with other girls (Miller 1998). On the other hand, Miller and White (2004) claim girls refuse femininity to avoid being victimized (Miller 2008). For instance, Miller's (2008) findings suggest that when girls could not avoid being on the streets they drew on violence as a way to resist victimization.

Pearce's (2004) work challenges the notion that girls entirely adapt to boy space. From her research with White and Bengali girls and boys from disadvantaged communities in the UK, she points out that girls negotiate and resist patriarchal spaces to engage in ways of being girls, thus resisting boy power. Pearce (2004) found both White and Bengali girls claimed the 'streets', 'stairwells' and 'landings' as their own private spaces to meet up with each other, hang around with friends, or play games sometimes viewed as deviant. Nonetheless, they were always cognizant of the danger boys and men imposed in those same spaces. The girls protected each other against boys challenging their presence on the streets by sometimes moving closer to home, traveling in pairs and carrying knives, sprays or alarms. Other research on resistance suggests girls construct, push the limits of and re-work femininity when participating in traditionally male-dominated spaces, while also recognizing the limits of this space (Kelly, Pomerantz & Dawn 2005; Pomerantz, Currie & Kelly 2004; Leblanc 1999).

The girls in Pearce's study construct the limits of boy power and space differently than those in Laidler and Hunt. In Laidler and Hunt's research girls resist traditional notions of femininity only when with their girlfriends at their homes and when with boy gang members conform to traditional femininity. They are only safe to resist femininity when with their home girls in traditional girl spaces. Differently, the girls in Pearce's study resist traditional notions of femininity by claiming the streets as their own space and do such things as hanging out and playing deviant games. While these girls push the limits of femininity by claiming traditionally male dominated space they must still be aware of the dangers of being in that space. Even though both Pearce and Laidler and

Hunt demonstrate a respective difference in how girls negotiate gendered social power and space, they both still conceptualized girls' resistance in a framework of victimization.

While this literature attempts to contextualize girls' resistance, Alder and Worrall (2004) argue that this analysis is still problematic. They contend that framing girls delinquent resistance in discourses of victimization contributes to the illusion that this is the only context in which girls perform non-passive femininities, while other forms of non-passive femininities are criminalized (P. 11). Hence, these kinds of analyses problematically move toward emphasizing a kind of "bad girl" femininity (Worrall 2004:44), where bad girl femininity means girls draw on masculine norms to be resistant (Messerchmidt 1997). For example, Messerchmidt (2004) found that girls from working class neighbourhoods use violence to resist patriarchy as a means of protecting themselves and others they care about. Although he contends that protecting themselves and others is a feminine quality, he maintains that violence is a masculine characteristic. Therefore, when girls take up violent behaviour they are engaging in a masculine role and thus, mirroring a masculine image. Some feminist researchers also focus on "bad girl femininity" but view girls as enacting violence by drawing on gendered norms about femininity that are adjusted to their environment (Miller 1998; Daly & Mahar 1997). For example, Miller (1998) talks about girls using sexually motivated behaviour as a means to rob boys. No matter what perspective is drawn on, Worrall (2004) argues that theorizations of bad girl femininity closely resembles a liberation thesis and contribute to harsher policy, harsher legislation on girls punishment and work to criminalize 'immoral' behaviour.

The research explored, here, construes girls' resistance in two ways. From the work of Ness (2004), Jones (2004), Laidler and Hunt (2001) and Miller (2008) girls resistance is viewed as safely adapting to patriarchal power and space. Differently, the work of Pearce (2004) and other subcultural literature (Kelly, Pomerantz & Currie 2005; Leblanc 1999) suggest that girls' resistance is about utilizing male dominated space to engage in femininity. Although this research is small and inconsistent, it raises important questions concerning how girls view their communities as gendered and how they negotiate gendered spaces. In addition, it raises questions concerning the context of non-passive femininity and victimization.

Finding Community in Girls Street Culture

The literature on girls' resistance in street culture often suggests that resistance is grounded in managing victimization within girls communities and that marginalized girls are most vulnerable to victimization. For instance, a majority of the US research indicates low-income, urban, ethnic girls frequently experience victimization in the home, making the streets a viable option (Kakar, Friedmann and Peck 2002; Chesney-Lind and Brown 1999; Miller 2001; Corrado, Odgers and Cohen 2000). Research also indicates being on the street in a disadvantaged community means girls are at even greater risks for victimization than in the home (Chen, Tyler, Whitbeck & Hoyt 2004; Acoca & Dedel 1998; Joe & Chesney-Lind 1995; Chesney-Lind & Brown 1999; Laidler & Hunt 2001). Some research points to various types of victimization for girls in disadvantaged communities such as witnessing violence (Schaffner 2007; Batchelor 2005) and sexual abuse or dating violence (Belknap & Holsinger 2006; Campbell 1980; Miller 2002).

Consequently, the conclusion is often drawn that girls resistance in neighbourhood-street culture is characterized by her ability to engage in violence to protect herself and that this violence is normalized in disadvantaged communities (Miller 2008; Ness 2004; Jones 2004; Phillips 2003; Molner, Roberts, Browne, Gardener and Buka 2005).

While the victimization literature is useful in contextualizing girls' resistance by acknowledging non-conformity, it amplifies disadvantaged communities as a risk factor ignoring any possibility that these communities may also provide a source of resilience for girls. The victimization literature dwells on negative accounts and ignores positive recollections. For example, a small but important literature indicates that girls who are victimized can also experience positive outcomes. Hymen and Williams (2001) interviewed sexually abused girls when admitted to hospital and again at a later age. They found only 30 of 136 young women became offenders after the abuse, and most exhibited pro-social behaviour. Other research by Williams, Lindsey, Kurtz & Jarvis 2001 also had similar findings. Hymen and Williams research demonstrates that positive outcomes can derive from negative situations. Their work, however, treats victimization as an individual factor and moves away from structural disadvantage, what Miller (2001) suggests is that the "detrimental social conditions" create interconnected troubles such as access to resources, living in poverty, gender inequality, racial stereotypes and victimization (discussion on P. 12). The victimization literature also uses neighbourhood and community interchangeably to make the case for disadvantaged neighbourhoods as a site of risk. Other research broadens and leaves aside the concept of victimization in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and draws attention to community as a social network that comes together amidst neighbourhood disadvantages.

By reframing the context of victimization and violence as larger social inequalities (such as racism, classism and religious discrimination) some research has indicated that girls' resistance in street culture relates to the solidarity of disadvantaged communities. Research by Jiwani (2005) points out that girls viewed their communities, although marginalized and exhibiting violence, as a safe haven. Jiwani (2005) found in her research with ethnically diverse girls that the communities they lived in, with people of their own ethnicity, acted as a kind of safe guard and support system from dominant social norms that racialized them. Jiwani (2005) also found the girls indicated there was a "veil of silence" concerning gender violence in their community suggesting that community can be both a space of risk and resilience. Similarly, Healy (2006) found in interviews with girls from working class communities in Belfast that they viewed their communities as a safe haven amidst the violence in their locality. The girls in Healy's research lived in communities segregated by religion and despite paramilitary groups within their communities and situations that often resulted in violence, the girls indicated they had lots of fun with friends, family, "and highlight much strength within the community".

Most importantly, research by Bottrell (2008) points to "risk discourse" about community as central to girls resistances and she theoretically positions resistance sociologically as resilience. From her research with girls in Australia, Bottrell (2008) found the girls identified with their community by labelling themselves TGG (The Glebe Girls). She argues that the TGG label represented resistance to outsider discourses categorizing the girls as *bad, out of control* and *youth problems*. Although the Glebe girls had some characteristics of gang girls, Bottrell (2008) maintains they were not a gang

because their identity was based on community solidarity. The girls stuck together forming a social network for each other by doing things such as: sharing clothes, supporting a friend through an abortion, putting together money to enjoy entertainment, providing shelter, and attending court dates. Importantly, Bottrell (2008) maintains that: "it is difficult to separate the girls' perceptions of Glebe, and themselves, from their responses to others' perception of Glebe... place and reputation are inextricably enmeshed" (P. 54).

Specifically, Bottrell (2008) argues that "the girls' street resistances" are indicative of their refusal to identify with negative images of themselves because they want control and agency. She further argues:

> they want to elude the bad image of the end of Glebe, to avoid it 'sticking' on them...they claim their place in the margins, in the network, but want these affiliations on their terms, not as defined in delimiting ways by others...their resistances may at times prohibit conventional options, but maintaining a strong sense of self and loyalties of alliance as forms of solidarity and empowerment may be taken as indicators of resilience in their determination to be successful on their own terms (Bottrell 2008:57).

In this sense, Bottrell (2008) is arguing that resistance is sometimes the means to resilience. Thus, resilience for the girls of Glebe involved creating solidarity within their community and resisting stereotypes imposed upon their communities that sometimes involved deviant or delinquent means.

Bottrell's work is important in that it highlights that community can precipitate a sense of resistance that in itself is a source of resilience, but it also involves a new component to understanding resilience- success. For Bottrell's girls, resistance was tied to their notions of success. Bottrell (2008) found that the Glebe girls believed they were viewed as never likely to be successful and as a result, the girls "desiring conventional

rewards is tempered by a wariness of expecting too much". This recognition of their social marginality defined the girls' views of success in pragmatic terms such as: returning to school, achieving success by one's self, being happy and providing opportunities for their children they did not have (P. 57). While these seem like conventional aspirations, Bottrell (2008) explains that these notions of success are sometimes interrupted when other things such as "making ends meet", "having some fun" or "looking after friends and family" must take priority. Hence, the girls' notions of success are derived from validation from their community as opposed to 'mainstream' success.

From the risk and resilience literature, important themes emerge involving the role of disadvantaged communities. From the work of Miller (2008), Ness (2004), Jones (2004), Chesney-Lind and Brown (1999) and Laidler and Hunt (2001), disadvantaged communities are viewed as risked and girls resistance is seen through a lens of routinized violence taking place in their communities. Challenging this literature, Jiwani (2005), Healy (2006) and Bottrell's (2008) work offers a different view of the role of community where girls negotiate larger structural discourses such as racialization, religious segregation, and find resistance within their communities. These divergent findings raise questions about girls' understanding and experiences of community and what they view as risk and resilience. Beyond these themes it is important to recognize that community is not a defined concept in this literature rather it plays a role in girls' coping strategies and in order to understand that role there is a need to know how girls experience community. In addition, an important point is raised through Bottrell's (2008) work where resistance

is situated as a process of resilience by recognizing what success means for marginalized girls and begs the question: what does the literature define as girls' success?

Girls Success, Femininity & Programming

Mainstream discourses about success are problematic for marginalized girls because it ignores their everyday realities and is then implemented in programming where favourable outcomes are not necessarily attainable. Harris (2004) argues that in mainstream discourses about success, there are two characterizations of girlhood, the "can-do" versus the "at-risk" girls. The can-do girl is viewed as successful at work, ambitious, delays motherhood, and is usually white as well as middle class. In contrast, the at-risk girls "are rendered vulnerable by their circumstances-living in poverty, in unstable homes, in communities known for violence, drugs, and crime" (Harris 2004: 25). At-risk girls are most notably seen as lower class and ethnic minorities who are viewed as potential failures. If they are identified early enough the girls can be labelled and monitored to "keep them on track", meaning the track of can-do girls (Harris 2004). In this sense, the can-do notion of girlhood is the measure of mainstream success that programming for at risk girls is directed toward.

Some of the literature on programming has identified issues that emerge from measuring marginalized girls in comparison to mainstream discourses about success. In Schaffner's (2006) study with girls in detention and adults who work with them, she found adults problematically hold negative beliefs about girls deemed delinquent or at-risk. For instance, adults said things such as: "girls are complicated...I don't like to work with them so much. They always come on to me" and "girls are harder to work with...the

boys will follow rules; they are quieter" (P. 158). Specific responses to race and class by adults are also highlighted, for instance, adults said things such as: "well you see it's in their culture to act like this. There is more crime in black neighbourhoods because blacks commit more crimes" or "schools and juvenile probation inherited family problems that go all the way back to slavery" (Schaffner 2006:159).

Belknap, Winter and Cady's (2003) interviews with professionals who work with at-risk and adjudicated girls reveals that girls success is also outlined by stereotypical notions of femininity, race and class. They report that professionals viewed girls needs for connections to others as simply common sense, girls needed programming separate from boys because girls focussed more on the boys than themselves, girls needed to form respect for women, and professionals believed girls needed to learn 'proper boundaries' with men. What is most problematic is that marginalized girls are viewed as needing to meet mainstream goals of success, that of the can-do girl. In viewing girls in this way, what may be a real need for them is not met or considered. In other words, the kinds of "needs" identified in Belknap, Winter and Cady's (2003) research with professionals are contradictory to the literature on girls success in disadvantaged communities and promote traditional notions of femininity.

Literature about what constitutes girls success in disadvantaged communities is limited; very few studies have explored girls' notions of success. Apart from Bottrell (2008), a few studies indicate that marginalized girls success is largely governed by existing resources within their communities. For example, Taylor, Smith and Taylor (2007) found girls in their late teens exhibited signs of resilience in finding paths to success whether by illegitimate means or a mix of both legitimate and non-legitimate.

Girls were prevalent players in street culture and operated a number of legitimate as well as illegitimate street networks for employment such as: dealing drugs, pimping, being in gangs or business/event promoter and managing a hair shop. It is worth noting that the legitimate strategies sometimes involved behind the scenes illegitimate operations such as selling stolen clothing. Some of the girls attempted conventional paths to success such as education and legitimate jobs, but most ended up getting fired, or were made to feel as lesser people because of their social status. Success for these young women was limited by social marginalization and they found success in the street.

Similarly, Mayeda, Chesney-Lind and Koo's (2001) found that young people viewed their success as limited because they were poor. In particular, while issues arose about boys being stereotyped as successful only as athletes, the girls' serious interests in athletics were negated by a lack of support from their schools. The girls also indicated that they believed education to be a path to success, but they were not supported in this interest by teachers because of stereotypes surrounding their ethnicity and class. Aside from lacking opportunity, Mayeda, Chesney-Lind and Koo's (2001) girls were often confronted with the image of white beauty held by boys in their community, where if they accept that image they are stigmatized as "whores" and if they reject it they are viewed as masculine.

The literature on girls' success, reviewed here, highlights both meanings of success defined by girls and how they negotiate the limits of mainstream discourses. While little programming research highlights marginalized girls' definitions of success, recommendations for girls programming by some have suggested that listening to what girls need is essential in understanding their success. For instance, Worrall (2001) argues

> girls in trouble are frequently highly resilient and resourceful-they need to be engaged in programmes and strategies which highlight their strengths rather than their deficits...girls in trouble frequently have a great deal to say for themselves-they need to be listened to and their insights incorporated into work with them (P. 91)

Other research by Miller (2008), Gaarder and Belknap (2004), Fullwood (2001), and Totten (2000) indicate that girls have ideas about programming for themselves and other girls. This literature highlights the need to listen to girls, but rarely are girls notions of success talked about in the literature.

Research Questions and Discussion

From discussion of the literature in this chapter, girls' resistance emerges out of structural disadvantages such as: violent neighbourhood culture, victimization, gendered expectations, and raced as well as classed discourses of success. These structural disadvantages sometimes call for imperfect coping mechanisms that are particularly highlighted in the girls' violence, gang and delinquency research. This literature links the style of girls' resistance (violence, gang membership and delinquency) to violent neighbourhood culture where disadvantaged communities are viewed as the underlying context of risk. This same literature also places these communities as a context where non-passive femininities are viewed as more functional. Non-passive femininities generate concern in larger social discourse in such a way that lower class and ethnic girls are inherently viewed as failures and unsuccessful. Small but important areas of research that offer alternative ways of viewing girls' resistance, disadvantaged communities and gendered norms led me to frame the following overarching research question: how do girls from disadvantaged communities negotiate discourses of femininity and community

to be resilient? This question is further broken down into mini research questions to address the main concepts and gaps in the literature examined in this chapter.

From the work of Chesney-Lind and Brown (1999), Laidler and Hunt (2001), Schaffner (2007), Batchelor (2005), Miller (2002, 2008), Ness (2004), and Philips (2003) disadvantaged communities are viewed as a risk factor by these researchers, while others, Jiwani (2005), Healy (2006) and Bottrell (2008) suggests that given racialized and classed discourses within dominant white and middle class society, girls communities are a supportive social network and space for them to be resilient. This literature about community led me to ask the following research question:

1) How do girls from disadvantaged communities experience and understand community?
    a) In what ways is this experience and understanding of community gendered, classed and raced?

Literature on girls resistance in disadvantaged communities identifies a number of risk factors that include: victimization (Miller 2008; Belknap & Holsinger 2006; Acoca 1999; Schaffner 2006), community violence (Schaffner 2006; Miller 2002, 2001), gang membership (Miller 2002, 2001; Joe & Chesney-Lind 1995; Campbell 1984; Laidler & Hunt 2001), patriarchy (Miller 2008; Chesney-Lind 1989), race or ethnicity (Chesney-Lind & Brown 1999; Miller 2001; Laidler & Hunt 2001) and poverty or socio-economic status (Miller 2008; Schaffner 2006; Joe & Chesney-Lind 1995). While these factors are common entities in girls resistance research, Ungar (2004) and Bottrell's (2008) work highlights resilience as a self-defined process and does not place any weight on resilience defined in terms of conventional or unconventional behaviour. Exploring this literature led me to ask the following research question:

2) What does "risk" mean for girls in disadvantaged communities?

From the work of Ungar (2004) and Bottrell (2008) resilience is understood as taking on different meanings and ways to negotiate risks depending on social location. In exploring the literature on girls' resistance using this lens and recognizing the incoherencies of risk and resistance led me to ask:

3) How do the girls negotiate the risks they define?
   a) In what ways are these negotiations gendered, raced and classed?
   b) In what ways do these negotiations resist gender, race and class?
   c) In what ways can these negotiations be read as successful?

Schaffner (2006) and Chesney-Lind, Winter and Cady's (2003) work problematizes how adults who view girls in terms of traditional femininity and in classed and raced ways can impede programming for girls. This literature is further problematized by Worrall (2001) who argues that girls are already resilient and we need to listen to their needs rather than make assumptions about their needs. Drawing from Worrall's argument, research by Miller (2008), Gaarder and Belknap (2004), Fullwood (2001), and Totten (2000) indicate that girls have ideas about programming for themselves and other girls, leading me to ask:

4) How might this reading about resistance as resilience be used to inform girls programming needs?

Discussion

The literature recognizing resistance as a process of resilience has only begun to take shape in the last few decades and Canadian research is particularly lacking. In addition, the research on girls' resistance has largely focused on girls involved in gangs and violence with specific focus on girls detained in the justice system or among school populations. Very little research has addressed girls' resistance and resilience in the

context of community and neighbourhood-street culture. Furthermore, most research has conducted studies with older girls from the ages 15-24 and little attention is paid to girls 14 and younger. While the literature sites the importance of early intervention and prevention, little is known about the experiences of younger girls. As a result, my research was shaped as an exploratory study to begin addressing some of these gaps in the literature and most importantly, to learn from girls what resilience means.

Chapter Three

Creative Methodologies for exploring girls Community

In pursuing a qualitative feminist approach to research, this research utilized photography, art-making, and focus groups to learn from girls about their experiences and understandings of risk and resilience. After a discussion of feminist methodology and a description of the girls involved in the research, the subsequent journey in this chapter will include a detailed discussion of the art making process and the content of each focus group meeting. In the final section of this chapter the methodological issues that arose during the research will be discussed.

Engaging Girls Views

McRobbie (2000) argues that in order to understand girl culture, it is necessary to move away "from the more transparent or indeed privileged site of youth subcultures" (P. 45). She suggests learning about girl culture "demands concrete, empirical investigation" with girls (McRobbie 2000:45). For McRobbie, understandings of girl culture need to be grounded in girls' realities and those realities are only accessible through working with girls. In a similar vein, Pearce (2004) contends that girls have "detailed knowledge" of their experiences and to understand that knowledge it is essential to learn from girls (P. 132). Other researchers have also made similar arguments for research with girls (Burman, Batchelor & Brown 2001; Bottrell 2008).

Drawing on girls' discourses and realities has often come to mean employing a standpoint feminist methodology. Harding (1986) suggests the standpoint approach is

"knowledge-seeking not in the feminine but in the feminist voice" (P. 55). A feminist stand-point approach allows peoples "experience(s) (to be) expressed in their own words as opposed to the words of establishment authority" (Barron 2000:46). This approach is drawn from Smith (1987) who argues that the feminist stand-point method allows people to talk about their realities, rather than the researcher assuming what they experience. For many researchers, standpoint feminism means giving girls a "voice" because they have been silenced and this is solved by allowing girls to talk about their experiences (Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Burman 2004; Brown 2003; Burman, Batchelor and Brown 2001). Although the standpoint approach is useful as a way to reciprocally communicate with girls it is also problematic.

Harris (2004) argues that problems exist with voice-centred approaches because they seek to identify girls' silence, diagnose them, and fix it through dialogue (P. 140). In doing so, the adult becomes both authority and mediator of girls' voices by taking over as the narrator of girls' stories. As a result, discussions form around the researchers' agenda and the girls' experiences get lost in that agenda. Harris (2004) further argues that voice-centred approaches can and have involved researchers reconnecting with their own youth thereby losing what maybe important for the girls as experts of their realities (P. 141).

Aside from issues of authority, the standpoint approach is also problematic in the kind of methods it usually encompasses and through strategies used to elicit girls' responses. Driver (2007) suggests that the standpoint approach is "limited to semi-structured interview forms that call for transparent and direct naming of empirical experiences" (P. 309). Driver (2007) challenges the "talking paradigm" suggesting there are often instances when "silence, uncertainty, and caution or dizzy enthusiasm" is

offered by young people and researchers are flustered with maintaining the linear academic text (P. 309). In this sense, Driver is pointing out that "talk" alone does not allow for moments when speech cannot describe a person's experiences and these moments represent a non-linear text. Driver (2007) developed her research as a performative model theoretically informed by Judith Butler.

To grasp an understanding of Driver's methodological logic requires a brief discussion of Butler's work. Briefly then, Butler's notion of performativity is about people "doing" gendered roles through "acts" or "performances" in everyday. Butler (1990) argues that "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, or a natural sort of being" (P. 33). Butler points out that gender is already decided for each of us through an existing discourse. As that discourse is played out through bodies (people) it becomes strengthened over time making gendered performances appear to be natural. However, Butler does not believe gender performances are natural because they are regulated.

Regulation, for Butler (1990) represents "...the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection" (P. 23). Butler points out that actions not socially accepted are deemed un-intelligible, yet to deem actions acceptable requires there to be some acknowledgement that unacceptable actions exist. In this light, Butler (1993) argues "performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects

that it names" (P. 2). In other words, typical gender roles are performed because they are intelligible or have a language to put to action. On the other hand, those actions that are not deemed part of typical gender roles are unintelligible because language does not support the action.

For Driver (2007) performativity is a linguistic embodiment "framing verbal and bodily enactments of gender identification" (P. 311). In this sense, gendered language produces bodies or the outward expression of behavior and because language defines these behaviors as masculine or feminine excluding certain 'other' experiences, language cannot always represent the body or behaviour (P. 311). Because bodies cannot completely be represented by language, Driver (2007) argues the performative paradigm is a philosophy to guide research practices that "allow(s) for productive openness while remaining cognizant of the legacies and powers of meanings out of the past" (P. 311). Driver (2007) explains that the performative paradigm also "allows for an indeterminate space between representation and experience, speech and embodiment that defies rational control" (P. 311). Her sense of performativity recognizes the multiple meanings of communication where communicating is about both speech and embodied behaviour leaving room for moments in between.

For Driver's (2007) research, a performative methodology allows for the youth she works with to participate in 'do it yourself' media projects. These projects involve young people choosing ways to express themselves on their own terms. Alternatively, Woodson (2007) draws on performance methodology in the context of culture rooted in the work of Erving Goffman. In this sense, culture is viewed as a performance and to perform means to interact with others and in doing so, behaviors that reflect personal

realities are revealed (Woodson 2007:288). For Woodson (2007), reducing culture to text and language is not congruent to the life worlds of youth. Instead she proposes that culture is about the "embodied practices to narrative description" as described by Taylor (2003), meaning that actions and behaviors tell the story of experiences. Woodson (2007) uses art as a communicative tool to understand how young people negotiate culture through interacting with one another.

While both Driver (2007) and Woodson's (2007) performance methodologies are useful for my research, there is a clear difference in how they approach agency. For Driver's methodology, because everything is reduced to language the notion of agency does not really exist. Oppositely, Woodson's methodology promotes a sense of agency among youth because the assumption is that culture is a performance made clear in public acts. Addressing issues of epistemological agency in feminist research, Comack (1999) argues that both language as inscribed on the body and bodily actions telling a narrative can make sense together. Although she speaks directly about differences in agency between poststructural feminism and standpoint feminism the same argument can be applied here with performance methodologies.

Comack (1999) argues that if feminist researchers think of categories of gender, even class and race, as social constructions, each woman's experience takes on a diverse meaning which becomes the subject of investigation (P. 295). What Comack (1999) points out is that women have choices, "but those choices are never 'free' or 'open'" (P. 302). Instead of viewing women as having free choice, standpoint feminism can provide a way to see the, "systematic barriers they confront which limit those choices" (P. 302). In this sense, Driver's (2007) performative methodology is one that assumes agency for

youth cannot exist because of binary gender norms, which is important to understand. However, Woodson's (2007) methodology can act as a way to explore the limits and boundaries imposed on girls.

For my research, I employ an integrated methodology that draws on both language and lived experiences of girls and that employs creative methods. Creative methods are somewhat new to social research where "participants are asked to make creative artifacts within the research process" (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006). In a published dialogue between Gauntlett and Holzwarth's (2006), Gauntlett points out that creative methods:

> enable people to communicate in a meaningful way about their identities and experiences, and their own thoughts about their identities and experiences, through creatively making things themselves, and then reflecting upon what they have made. this is a process which takes time, and which uses the hands and body as well as mind (P. 82)

Hence, creative methods allow both language and the body interact together.

For Driver (2007) digital video was a way for queer youth to express themselves both inside and outside gender dichotomies (P. 316), relying on image making to map these negotiations of gender. For my research, I use photography and art-making to allow for self expression as well as interaction with others. In particular, photography was used as a way for participants to map their own self expression. Harper (1998) explains that photographs are pictures of experience that are directly from the position of the person standing behind the camera (P. 29). Similar to the photography as a self representation, my participants received an art kit containing colored paper, stickers, markers, colored pencils, pens, and a journal to further enhance girls opportunities.

Focus groups were used as a way to meet the participants and engage in collective art-making and group discussions each week. Many feminist scholars have discussed the

usefulness of focus groups in research. Pollack's (2003) research on incarcerated women, found that focus groups worked well for marginalized populations. She argues that feminists (Madriz 2001; Montell 1999; and Wilkinson 1998) have shown confidence in focus groups:

> feminist researchers have argued that focus groups are a particular appropriate methodology for research with oppressed and marginalized groups because they have the potential to shift power from the researcher to the participant (Pollack 2003:461).

Aside from shifting power from researcher to participant, others have also noted in research with girls that focus groups allow for co-constructing meaning (Overlien, Aronsson and Hyden 2002; Wilkinson 1998). According to Overlien, Aronsson and Hyden (2002) and Wilkinson (1998) the co-construction of meaning in focus group discussions means that topics are collectively deconstructed by participants through processes of agreement, disagreement and elaboration on points brought up among participants. In other words, there is potential for instances of collaborative narration and opposing arguments, all of which work as co-construction in the sense that participants collectively take up topics and deconstruct meanings.

For collective art-making to take place focus groups are a useful tool. Woodson (2007) highlights the importance of collective art making as a cultural practice where youth create images together representing "structural significance of experience and culture" (P. 291). In this sense, similar to focus groups, collective art-making provides the opportunity for co-constructing meaning. For my research, the collective art-making process included a sharing of photographs through individually created poster boards of pictures and the collective creation of a mural during focus group meetings.

Meet the Girls

There were nine girls between the ages 11-14 who participated in my research during the spring of 2009, all of whom were connected to either one of two community centres that offered after school and summer programs for low-income families in the urban Atlantic Region. According to information and conversations with centre staff, most of the youth who attend these community centres come from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. single parent families, living in social housing, experiencing low-income) and the programs are usually geared toward youth at-risk. Most of the girls who participated in the research were from low-income families. Five of the girls who participated in my research were white and four were black or bi-racial. While the black girls and one of the white girls lived in public housing, the others lived in various locations within the same neighbourhood district. Because the sample was small, to avoid compromising anonymity I will not further detail the characteristics of each group of girls. For the same reasons I avoided using pseudo names so that readers would not be able to connect the girls' responses with specific individuals.

The initial meeting and focus groups were held in private rooms in each community centre where the girls were familiar with the space we used. All of the girls participated in every focus group except one session, where the meeting day had changed due to a holiday in-service. The girls who missed that particular focus group contributed their views of that topic in the following focus group meeting. Some of the girls were also involved in extra-curricular activities such as basketball, taekwondo, cadets and a variety of other things mostly school related. As a result, it was challenging to find a time that

suited everyone, and one community centre allowed us to stay after hours to have our focus groups. All of the girls were outgoing and enthusiastic about their interests, and always wanted to demonstrate their skills or provide me with scenario-skits, which they did numerous times.

The Girls Focus Groups

Prior to meeting the girls, I contacted the community centres and met with the coordinators about my research. If they expressed an interest in my research project I sent a letter (Appendix D) requesting their help and asking for a formal letter of confirmation. To recruit the girls, I passed out pamphlets (Appendix A) at the centres to the girls during their after school programs. This included a parental consent form (Appendix A). I picked up the consent forms and girls contact information from each centre. One of the centres had already worked out a day with the girls that was best for them to meet, while I contacted the girls from the other centre to set up a meeting time for our initial meeting. I arranged for a staff support person to be available during and after the sessions should the girls need someone to talk to. Once meeting times were arranged, the girls and I met for the initial meeting (Appendix F). This meeting involved going over the purpose of the research; what confidentiality and anonymity meant; what I was asking of them regarding the disposable cameras, art kit, and during our focus groups; a discussion of boundaries for taking pictures in an ethical way; and a show of samples of my own art work to demonstrate what I was asking of them. At the initial meeting, each of the girls was given the first of three disposable cameras, the first set of guiding questions (Appendix C), and an art kit. All of the girls were informed that their participation was voluntary and they

could leave at anytime, and they were asked to sign their own participant consent forms (Appendix B). I also explained that they were also responsible for keeping everyone's name confidential as well as what went on in the focus groups. As a way for the girls or their parents to contact me if they had questions or concerns I set up a temporary landline phone number where I could be reached. In the final focus group, each of the girls received a feedback letter (Appendix E) thanking them and ten dollars for participating in my research.

Four focus group discussions at the centres took place once a week over the duration of four weeks. All the focus groups were video and tape-recorded and lasted approximately two hours. I video-taped the focus groups in order to transcribe the discussions that took place and the audio recordings were used as a backup in case the video audio failed. A few days before each focus group meeting, I picked up the disposable cameras at the centres and had the films developed. At the beginning of each focus group, I provided meals for the girls and they were asked to create a poster board to display their photographs. Art supplies were provided for the girls to construct their poster boards. After poster boards were completed, the girls shared and discussed what their pictures and art represented for them and any questions presented about their work. At the end of each focus group, the girls were given a new disposable camera and set of guiding questions for the following focus group. In the third focus group, the girls received a set of guiding questions for the construction an art mural in the final meeting.

All four sets of focus groups were designed to address the specific themes of discourse raised in the literature and the research question from the last chapter: community, gendered social power and expectations, risk, resilience and programming.

Each of the guiding questions was designed to be broad so that the girls could facilitate the research process in their own way and create a space they were comfortable with.

Focus Group 1

The first focus group session was designed to broadly address my research questions about community, risk and resilience: 1) How do girls from disadvantaged communities understand and experience community? 2) What does "risk" mean for the girls in these contexts? 3) How do the girls negotiate these risks? These three questions are about the girls understanding of their community, their views on what risks are apparent in their community and their resilience to risk. The specific questions I asked the girls are:

A) Can you help me understand what daily life is like for you in your community?

B) Can you show me and explain to me some of the negative situations girls face within your community?

C) Can you show me and explain to me some of positive things for girls in your community?

Focus Group 2

The second focus group centred on what success means to girls in relation to differences in social power among girls and how they are resilient to factors that can interfere with their success. This line of questioning addresses resilience by attempting to understand how the girls negotiate risks in relation to their views of success. In this sense, negotiating risk is meant to discover processes of resilience. More specifically, my interest in focus group 2 was to explore: in what ways the girls' negotiations of risk were raced and classed, resisted race and class expectations, could be read as successful. To

learn from the girls about their understandings and experiences of success in relation to social power, I asked them the following questions:

A) Can you help me understand how girls who grow up in your neighbourhood are successful?

B) Can you show me and explain to me the things you do and you think other girls do when things get tough?

Focus Group 3

Focus group 3 explored how the girls viewed boys and girls in relation to their social power within their community. Furthermore, I wanted to explore how the girls' negotiations of risk and community were gendered, how they resisted gendered norms, and when the girls viewed these negotiations as successful. In other words, this meeting was to understand how the girls are resilient to gendered social power. The girls were presented the following questions:

A) Can you help me understand what girls and guys do for fun in your community?

B) What places do girls and guys hang out?

C) What things are girls interested in and what things do you think boys are interested in?

Focus Group 4

The last focus group centred on understanding the practical needs the girls expressed and what discourses about risk, gendered norms and community girls draw on to consider their own programming. For this focus group the girls planned and created their own mural to represent their ideas about programming, where I asked them to:

A) Imagine a program or thing to do just for girls that you would like to participate in. What would that look like for you?

It is important to note that during this focus group, unexpectedly, the girls began telling stories about their sense of resilience. In recognizing girls' resilience discourse in talk about programming, this led me to consider a more conceptual analysis about the programming question.

Piece Work: Analyzing Image-Based Data

Analyzing image-based data has proved to be a challenging process largely because there are limited guides to assist in the analysis phase of research. Schnettler and Raab (2008) argue that because academia's interest in visual data became unpopular in the 1980s, "methodical traditions and competence in analyzing visual and audiovisual data remains underdeveloped and deficient in sociology" (P. 4). While analyzing the data is a challenge, the analysis writing process is also lacking relevant guides when using creative or image based methodologies. Banks (2007) offers some insight in how to represent visual data, but his writings are brief with little detail or process guides to writing or analyzing.

In order to analyze the data, I transcribed the focus group discussions using the video recordings and I sometimes used the audio recordings when I found the videos to be inaudible. I took a picture of each poster the girls made for my own records and matched the discussions from the transcripts with each poster. In order to make sense of all the data, I manipulated the posters, pictures and transcripts in groupings and re-groupings to gain perspective on the similarities and dissimilarities. I made sense of the data by comparing themes from the data to themes from the literature. I used the walls of

my apartment to post the girls responses dividing them by each focus group and the guiding questions I asked them. Each focus group represented a different wall in my apartment with quotes from the transcripts that spoke to the guiding questions, the posters and captions where the girls had explained their posters, and the pictures that became relevant during our discussions. I manipulated the posters, pictures and transcripts in groupings and re-groupings to gain perspective on emerging themes. After doing this several times the themes became clearer.

Reflexivity & Methodological Concerns

In positioning myself as influencing the process of this research, I take up my own social location through a discussion of my experience with the research ethics board and other issues that arose during the research. In particular, I draw attention to some of the challenges I encountered during the focus group sessions and the ways in which my responses and behaviour may have influenced the girls' discussions. Throughout the research process, I found myself reflecting on my experience with the ethics board and how the changes I made to the design of the research based on the Board's recommendations impacted the research outcomes.

Ethical Concerns, Social Risks & the Least-Adult Role

In research with human participants there are always ethical concerns that must be carefully considered throughout the entire research process and especially in the methodological design. These concerns are even greater in research with young people because they are generally considered a vulnerable population. My research design

generated concern from the ethics board because it involved girls from disadvantaged communities and questions about risk within their communities. The ethics board voiced concerns that the girls would be in focus groups discussing negative community situations and maintained that this could impact the girls' status, privacy, reputation or well-being. They also suggested that instructions for the photographs and art-mural needed more specific direction from me because the girls could potentially face risky situations if they, for example, were to take pictures of their "local drug dealer", "people engaging in vandalism or illegal activity", or "images that suggest abuse (or) neglect". In terms of the mural, the ethics board was concerned with anonymity because they believed if the mural was eventually displayed in the community centre, others would know which girls had participated in my research.

In response to these concerns, I created boundaries for the girls' photographs and mural making by implementing guidelines the following rules: avoid face shots of any people; take pictures from behind people; do not take pictures of any person or thing that could put them in harm's way (i.e. people fighting in real life or doing drugs); and, for the mural, the girls were asked to avoid putting names on any of their work or the name of their neighbourhoods or symbols that represent their neighbourhood.

Other methodological and epistemological issues arose through my efforts to develop rapport with the girls. In an attempt to ensure that the girls would feel comfortable enough with my presence to talk freely in the focus groups, I planned to position myself in what Mandell (1988) refers to as the least-adult role, a role that: "...suspends adult notions of cognitive, social and intellectual superiority and minimizes physical differences by advocating that adult researchers closely follow children's ways

and interact with children within their perspective" (P. 464). My attempts at assuming this least-adult role were compromised by my efforts to comply with the ethics board's concerns about picture taking. In placing boundaries on the picture taking, I came to realize during the focus groups that this strategy had positioned me as an adult authority and affected what the girls were prepared to share with me. I was challenged by the girls when I talked about refraining from taking pictures that could put them in danger, such as photographing "illegal stuff" in that some of the girls said "why would we do that, that's just stupid", "we know", "a, ya, right". This was the start of an ongoing process of role reversals where sometimes the girls seemed to position themselves in an adult role, viewing me as least-adult; yet at other times I was treated as part of their group while other times I was viewed as the adult. In this regard, my plan to assume the least adult role was not as simple or straightforward as is implied by Mandell's definition.

I began this research assuming that I shared common experiences with the girls because I too came from social housing and a low income family. I thought of myself as having, to some degree, a sense of 'insider knowledge' and that this would help me relate to the girls by taking on a least-adult role. During the focus groups, however, it became evident that some of the girls thought of me as an outsider and refrained from telling me about some of their experiences. For instance, during one of the focus groups the girls said things such as "we said too many bad things". Similarly, when I asked the girls if they had anything else they wanted to discuss some of them sarcastically said "you going to keep on trying", "you gotta keep your head held high", "you gotta keep on climbing", and "you gotta keep on bugging people". Clearly, contrary to the Ethics Board's concerns, the challenge in my research was not centred on the girls being too forthcoming

about harmful community elements or taking pictures that would reflect illegality. Instead, part of the challenge was created by my involuntary positioning as an adult authority, which in turn, lessened the girls desire to share experiences with me in a manner where they felt at ease. This experience made me aware that although I may have had similar experiences as these girls, they sometimes positioned me outside of their world as both adult and community outsider and were not willing to share.

My assuming a least adult role was further challenged when, at times, I felt pressure from the community centres to maintain order during our focus group discussions. In a conversation with a staff member, it was suggested that I not use certain furniture in the room because, in the experiences of staff, the girls had gotten rowdy and during regular centre programming they were not permitted to use the items. There were also incidents during focus groups where the girls became animated and raised their voices during discussions such as those regarding boys expectations of girls. In these instances, I sometimes felt compelled to settle the girls down by changing subjects or asking them to lower their voices. In some sense, I think that my settling the girls down affected the research relationship because sometimes after these situations arose the girls seemed quiet and took a while to open up again to discussion.

Another concern raised by the ethics board involved the $10 compensation that I offered the girls for participating in my research. The ethics board asked, "do you have a sense (or any information) on whether these marginalized girls might be overly enticed (by the money) to take part?." In my response to the Board, I argued that I doubted a mere $10 would solve any great financial need for the girls and that the money was intended to demonstrate my appreciation for them giving up their time. While the Board's concern

was one of enticement, interestingly, this compensation did become a matter of concern for some of the girls and raised another instance for me of adult role reversal. One of the girls told me she could not possibly take the $10 because I had bought them food, supplied all the art materials and furthermore, that I "was just a student and couldn't afford that". I found myself reasoning with this particular girl by asking her to take the compensation saying that I would feel much better if I could give her something in return for all her hard work during our meetings. Although my intention was to take on a least-adult role to enhance rapport, ease communication with the girls and be part of their group, in this instance, it seemed that while the girls did position me as least adult because they perceived me as a student and poor and therefore vulnerable, they did not treat me as part of the group but rather took on an adult role in caring and expressing concern for my well-being.

Taking on a least-adult role was also problematic for me because I was not completely prepared when the girls (ages 11, 12) discussed experiences and used language, that upon reflection, I positioned as more appropriate for an adult. They talked about controlling boyfriends, long-term relationships and used adult language and conceptualizations about everyday life, relationships and sexuality. For instance, one of the girls explained the controlling nature of her ex-boyfriend:

> *my daily life would be like hanging with all my friends, and as you can see in some of these pictures I will get pissed off, my ex won't let anyone near me, but like this picture here* [centre picture] *I was pissed off but my ex insisted on being immature...yeah when I feel crappy he'll come up behind me and give me a big hug and sometimes I'm not ok with that but other times I am*

Another girl discussed a long-term relationship she had with a boy that involved love:

> *me and* [boy] *were dating a while ago and I couldn't tell my mom because she wouldn't let me have a boyfriend...so after 8 months of our relationship I couldn't handle the relationship because I couldn't tell my mom...and he totally understands because he has been through it before with someone else, so he totally understands how I feel and he still really loves me, every time I'm on the phone and have to go or he has to go he'll still say "I love you, bye"*

Some of the girls also used language that I had not expected from girls of this age, such as: *"she is very tolerant at times"*, *"I have a very well planned schedule"*, *"I cannot contemplate this for the rest of my life"*, *and "girls are unique and have utility"*. In a conversation about sexuality, they explained the meaning of *crooked* and *straight*:

> *R1: Oh, I got something to tell you about (girl), she went to the girl boat*
> *R2: I think she's crooked*
> *Researcher: what's crooked?*
> *R2: it's a word we say cause instead of saying lesbian, so we just say crooked and straight*
> *R1: so, I always do this...straight (index finger straight)...crooked (index finger bent)*

These types of exchanges made me uncertain what the role of least-adult meant in our interactions. In reflecting upon this experience, it became apparent to me that my assumptions and expectations about girl behaviour came from my adult perspective. In this sense, it appears that the least adult role does not only effect how a researcher develops rapport and in my case, how I behaved in the focus groups but also has the potential to affect interpretations and analyses of the data. The larger methodological challenge for me became one of putting aside adult assumptions when analyzing the girls' understanding of their world.

Ethics, Emotional Risks & Least Adult Status

During the focus group discussions, I experienced unanticipated emotional responses that I was unprepared for because I carefully attended to the Ethics Board's focus on the emotional responses of the girls and paid less attention to my own responses. The Board had expressed concern about potential emotional responses among the girls because I was asking them about negative situations in their community. The Ethics Board argued that because some questions were about negative situations, "it's likely that the girls will disclose information of an intimate or otherwise sensitive nature", that could upset them. While I reconciled this concern by ensuring there was a support person available to the girls and planned to facilitate our discussions to stay on the topic of community, there were emotional responses by the girls, they were not what the REB feared, and they were totally unanticipated by me.

Some of the girls often got frustrated, upset and angry with anyone who would interrupt our meetings. Girls who were not participating in the research project would hang around the door of our room, try to peek inside or come in to ask us what we were doing. These interruptions provoked some of the girls to yell "get out", "this isn't for you" or "mind your own business", and sometimes the girls even threatend intruders by saying things like "watch, when I'm done here". The girls clearly claimed our meetings and space as their own and wished to protect it from outsiders. Additionally, some of the girls also displayed anger and frustration during some discussions. The girls would become animated and loud when they discussed how boys think they should act or how boys have more opportunities.

Sometimes emotional responses contributed to role reversals when the girls had positioned me as part of their group and I found myself uncertain of how to respond. So

for example, some of the girls became comfortable with talking about a variety of intimate things such as menstruating, sex and health. Sometimes, the girls talked about how they were feeling cranky because they were menstruating and one of the girls even apologized to me before a session in case she became cranky with me. I was unprepared for her comment as I had been setting up our space to begin our focus group and reacted surprised and she became embarrassed. In realizing her embarrassment, I quickly said to her that "all us girls go through the same thing every month, no worries". She seemed satisfied with my response and was less embarrassed.

In another instance during a focus group, one of the girls started menstruation for the first time and I was uncertain whether this was to be treated as an embarrassing or congratulatory experience. It turned out that it was both. I first asked her if she was ok and that proved to be embarrassing for her, I then said "how exciting this must be for you", and the response was a smile; meanwhile my reaction to myself was "Oh, Shit; Oh Shit". In this case, the girls seemed to position me as part of their group, as a person who has similar experiences, however, my reaction to myself reflected my own uncertainty of what role they positioned me in or what role I felt was appropriate. It seems that I acted initially as an adult and the girl was embarrassed then when I switched to least adult and a member of the group, they were satisfied but I was left feeling uncomfortable. I am left to wonder if I had been permitted by the Board to spend some time prior to the focus groups in building rapport with the girls if I would have been able to develop a better practical sense of what adopting a least-adult role actually means when conducting focus groups with adolescent girls.

Participant-Researcher Relationships

How researchers treat and form relationships with their participants is recognized as critical in the research process, especially in qualitative research methodologies. A number of youth researchers indicate that rapport building is essential for work with young people (Leonard, 2007; Taft, 2007; Amsden and VanWynsberghe, 2005; Wilson and White, 2001). Building rapport with young people is about gaining trust and that means showing or demonstrating that participants can trust the researcher. My initial recruiting design involved my attendance at the community centres for a few weeks prior to the research with the girls; mainly because the girls did not know me and the centres had suggested this might be useful for the girls. The Ethics Board had concerns about this rapport building process in that they thought spending time in the centres prior to commencing the research would "increase the potential for vulnerability" of the girls. They maintained that spending time with the girls would make them "less critical in their thinking about risks and potential consequences of participating in the study". In response, I altered the recruiting design by eliminating this early visit to the centres and hoped that the initial meeting with the girls would be enough to build rapport. Unfortunately, the initial meeting did not appear to provide enough time to build rapport with some of the girls. As the focus groups progressed, I often got the feeling that I had not earned the trust of some of the girls because they were not always fully involved in discussions. For them, I remained the outsider and the adult authority. Rapport came quickly with others. By the second focus group, some of the girls were giving me hugs and wanted me to see their new creations as I was coming in the door. One day, I arrived at the centre and found reptiles (i.e. snakes and lizards) crawling around on tables from an

earlier activity the centre put on and the girls were excited to show me all the different amphibians. While somewhat scary for me, it nonetheless made me feel that I had gained the girls trust.

Where quality research depends on rapport, a related concern arises from appropriate ways to end the relationship. My methods were designed to ensure the girls would shape the research process and would be able to break the bonds we formed through the experience. I constantly reminded them about our last focus group and that we would go our separate ways after the research ended. I also designed the last focus group as more casual than the others with pizza, pop and treats and I presented the mural-making as a final project to bring our meetings to an end. I was not prepared for and had not considered was that breaking the bond developed between the girls and myself would affect me. At the last focus group, the girls asked if they would ever see me again and I told them the truth, that I would only be back to the centre to pick up a few things and they seemed comfortable with this. Toward the end of this meeting, some of the girls surprised me with a card they made telling me how much they loved me and would miss me. I almost cried. Worse, my efforts at holding back my tears lead to all the girls piled in for a group hug around me thereby increasing the emotional content of the moment. Once again I was reminded, on reflection, about my own confusion around being one of the girls or the adult and not knowing which was appropriate.

Discussion

Creative methodologies for exploring girls views is an uncommon research practice in the field of criminology. Drawing on both performance and standpoint

epistemologies created an atmosphere conducive to learning from the girls about their experiences and understandings of processes of risk and resilience. Through engaging in focus groups, photography, and art-making with the girls, my research provides a unique and valuable insight into girl culture. Although methodological concerns surfaced during the research process, many lessons and insights can be taken away from this experience for future feminist inquiries. Reconsidering the necessity of building rapport with young people prior to research, addressing issues of ending the research, viewing emotional responses in more realistic and less negative terms, as well as, reconsidering institutional research practices that assume young people are always vulnerable are four issues raised by this research. Additionally, this research complicates the meaning of least-adult in work with girls and how our own perceptions of girl culture are important to reflect upon in assuming this role. By reflecting on ethical concerns throughout the research process and offering different perspectives, my research maintained the integrity and reflexive nature of a feminist methodology. My work with the girls unwrapped discourses about marginalization, resistance, and access to power and space which have implications for knowledge about girls resilience and for practical work with girls.

Part 2: Girls Creative Discourse

Chapter Four

Descriptive Findings

In this chapter I take the reader through the first stages of my research journey. I begin with a description of each focus group with the girls and highlight some of the interesting discussions that took place as well as some of the posters and photographs and indicate parallels between themes from the girls' discussions and the literature. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a summary discussion of these themes and set the stage for the analytical discussion that follows in chapter five and six.

Girls & Community

The girls experience and understanding of community guided our first focus group discussion. The main focus was their experiences of "daily life" and the "positive" as well as "negative" things they face in their communities. The girls and I began the focus group by eating supper and chatting about their day at school, the things they liked, such as favourite foods, and funny stories that took place during the girls' day. After we ate, the girls began constructing their poster boards, swapping pictures with one another and making general conversation. All the girls seemed especially fond of constructing their poster boards; many took great care in organizing and decorating their photos.

While the girls were very involved in their poster making, the discussion portion of the focus group was a more challenging task. Throughout the discussions, some of the girls were distracted by outside noises and congregated to the window where they shouted at people outside trying to get their attention. Several times I directed the girls away from

the window and back to our table to continue our discussions. In other instances, during our discussions some of the girls became sidetracked by talking about their love for Edward, a popular vampire character in the movie Twilight. During this Edward-talk, they jokingly argued about who among them loved Edward more and mentioned scenes from the Twilight movie. As a result, the discussion on girls & community went in many directions and the guiding questions were a useful resource in getting the discussion back on track whenever it drifted. In most cases, the girls directed each other back to the guiding questions, especially when they tired of discussing Edward.

The girls' posters represented their sense of community in a variety of ways. Some of the girls chose to construct their posters through writing quotes and poetry. For instance, one of the girls wrote a poem for her poster board which reads: *"girls, girls they love to laugh and play; girls, girls they never stay in one place; they laugh and cry and sing lullabies; and girls love their best friend"*. Figure 1 also shows a quote written by another girl. Other girls

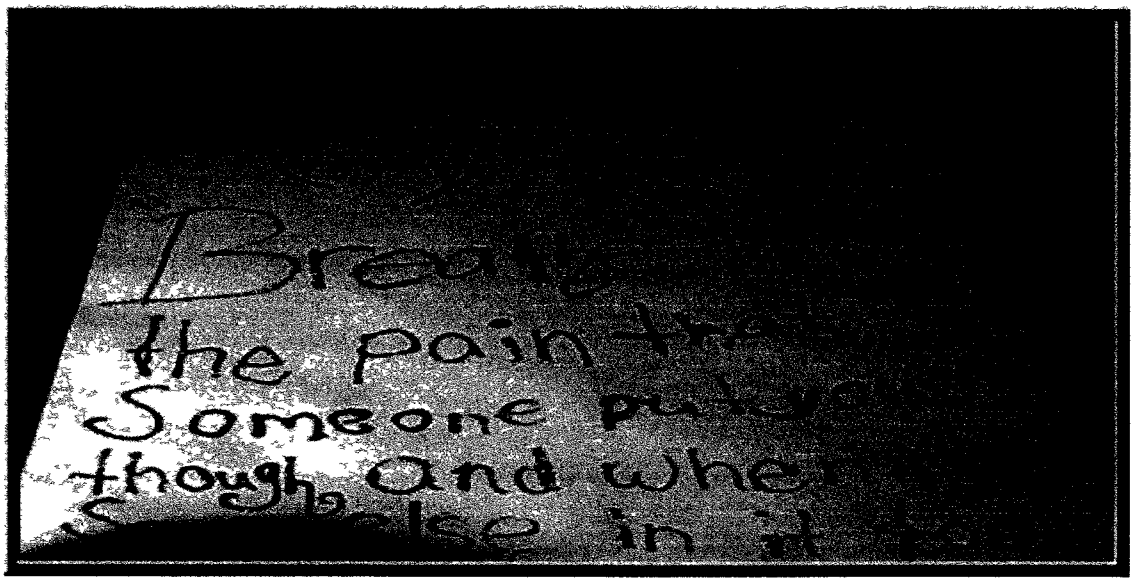


Figure 1. The quote reads "Breathe through the pain that someone put you through and when putting someone else in it too". She elaborates in the discussion: "that explains that I have a heart for other people and I care about what other people feel".

constructed their posters about community by neatly arranging photos representing the most important things to them (see Figure 1 and 2). Examples of important things include their pets, family members, friends and poster crushes. Some posters were constructed to tell a story through a collage of images (see Figure 4 and 5).

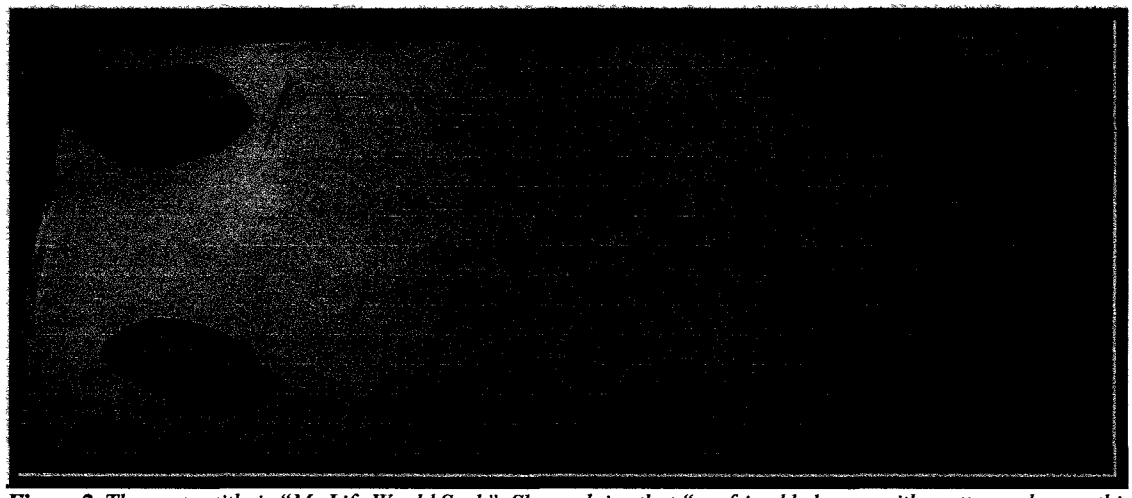


Figure 2. The poster title is "My Life Would Suck". She explains that "my friend helps me with pretty much everything, when she's upset I help her because yeah, I had a loss in my family a couple months ago like last year and she helped me through that".

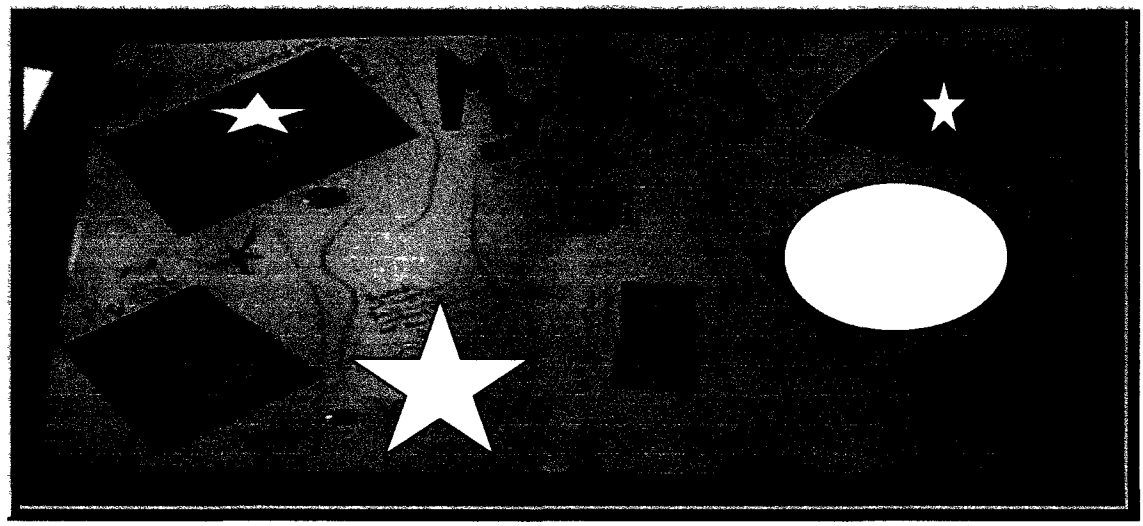


Figure 3. The top centre reads: "Appreciate your birthday 1000's of people cannot celebrate it". The centre left reads: "Friends will laugh at you, Best friends will laugh cuz they're the ones that tripped you".

While most of the girls constructed their poster to represent one main theme in their lives, some chose a different style of design. A few constructed their posters to represent

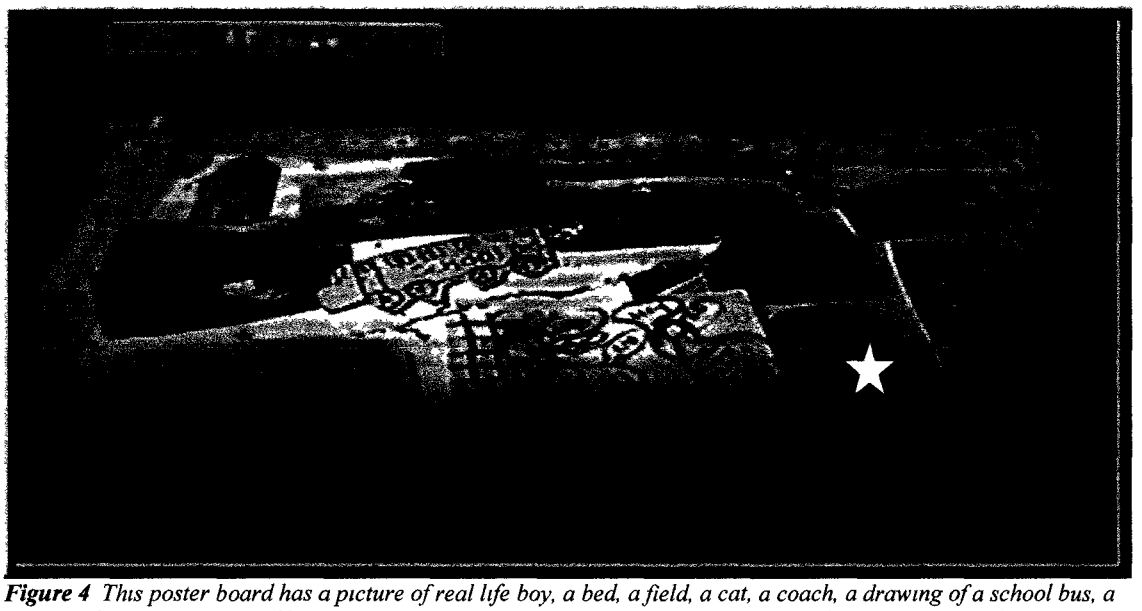


Figure 4 *This poster board has a picture of real life boy, a bed, a field, a cat, a coach, a drawing of a school bus, a picture of a bed, a picture of her poster-crush Edward, her sister, a drawing of school and a drawing of a boy smoking a cigarette talking to a girl*

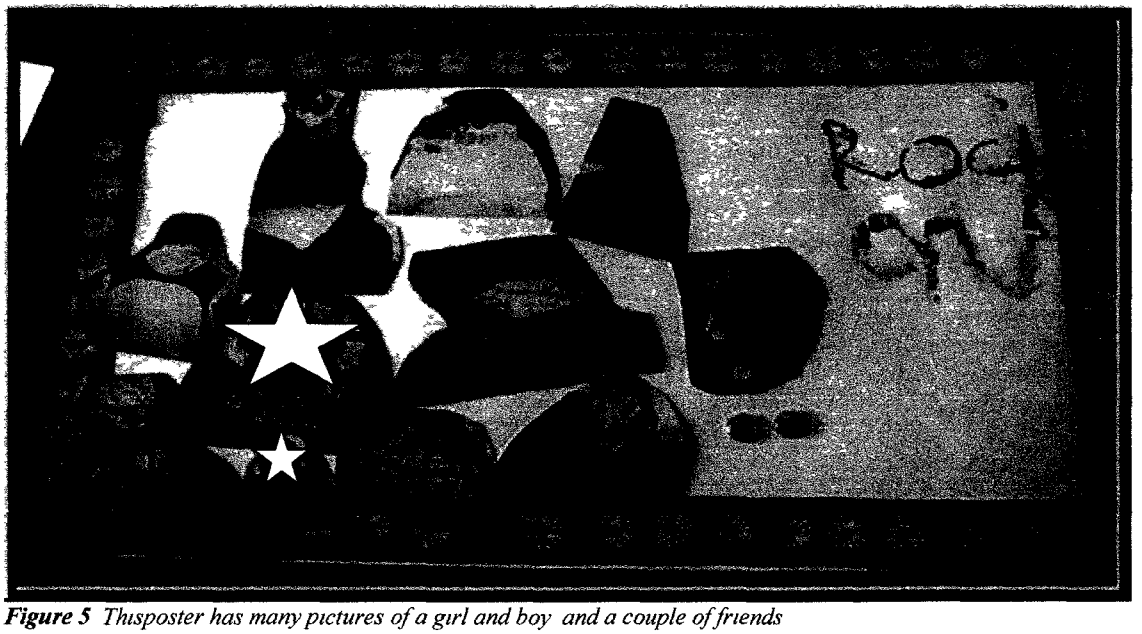


Figure 5 *Thisposter has many pictures of a girl and boy and a couple of friends*

each of the guiding questions. Unfortunately, I cannot share these three poster boards as a whole given their identifying nature. However, there are some interesting pictures that are un-identifying and some which I have distorted to ensure anonymity (see Figure 6).

Figure 6*. The top right image is of a boy and girl playing football in a field, which represents daily life, top middle image is of a girl in a taekwondo uniform representing positive things, the top right image is of a girl climbing in a window representing negative aspects of community and the bottom image is of a girl smiling making a peace sign also representing the positive things in the girls community.*

The girls began to show and explain to me their everyday realities of community in our first discussion. From their views, community was about spaces, activities, relationships to adults or friends, and supports or resources. From the girls' posters and

discussions they explained 'daily life' and the positive aspects of their community as all encompassing. For some of the girls, a sense of community came from writing poems, songs, or quotes. These girls said writing was a part of their community, *"because writing out songs or poems is fun"* or *"because without that I would never survive because I need to write"*. Writing acted as a way to express their feelings and emotions, especially during times of heartache with boys or times of frustration and anger. These themes became more apparent in the focus groups that followed.

For many of the girls being part of a community involved extra-curricular activities that provided support and ways to have fun such as *"cadets"*, *"girl guides"*, *"taekwondo"* and *"sports"*. All of the girls focused on their local community centre, and some discussed its importance by saying it is a place to *"get the kids off the street"*, feel safe or *"to get all my stress out"*. Although, in this regard, many discussed their community centre as a support, some simply said they like going to the community centre because, *"they got like activities just for girls and stuff"*. Following this line of thought, having stuff for girls was viewed as important because, as one girl said, *"there is more stuff for boys than girls around here like football and stuff"*. Their response indicates that the community centre is useful as a resource for engaging in activities and suggests issues of patriarchal power.

Relationships were an important aspect of community for all the girls and while some focused on friendships, others focused more often on adult relationships. Friendships, particularly girl friendship circles, were described in terms of having fun. The girls who specifically focused on having fun and friendships described this through pictures of girls playing in a basketball court (see Figure 7 and 8). Other girls talked about

school as part of their community (see Figure 9 and 10) and connected that to important relationships with adults. For instance, one of the girls explained that her teacher was 'like a second mom'. In addition, see Figure 11 representing one young woman's favourite teacher.

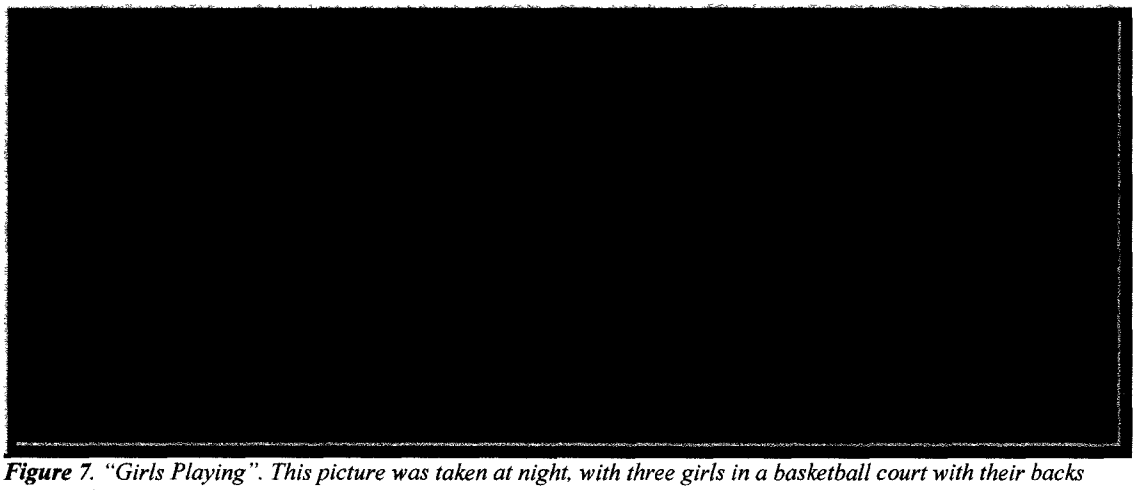


Figure 7. *"Girls Playing". This picture was taken at night, with three girls in a basketball court with their backs against the fence.*

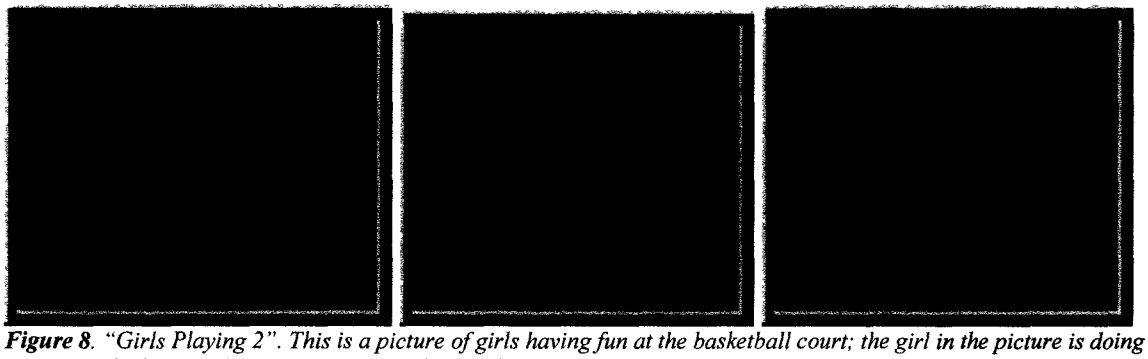


Figure 8. *"Girls Playing 2". This is a picture of girls having fun at the basketball court; the girl in the picture is doing a cartwheel where each position in a cartwheel is demonstrated.*

Figure 9 *"School as part of community"*

Figure 10. *"School as part of community 2"*

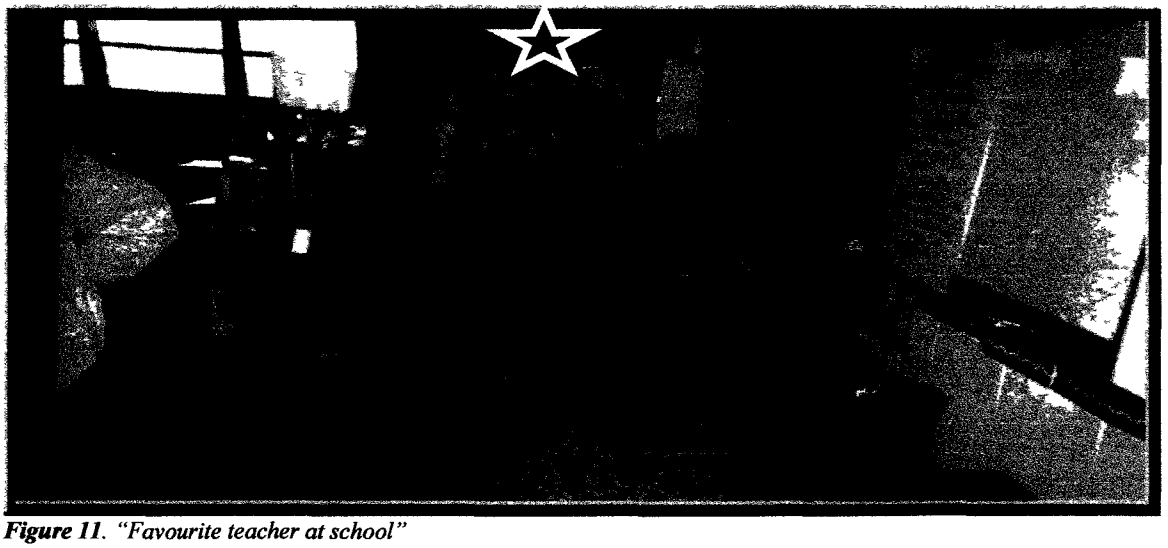


Figure 11. *"Favourite teacher at school"*

Most of the girls' posters reflected the positive things in their life, while the negative things were talked about throughout our discussions. All of the girls talked about crime, violence and violence toward women as taking place in their communities, but was not their focus of discussion. Some of the girls discussed peer pressure regarding such activities as smoking (see Figure 12), drugs, running away and having sex; all things adults in their lives disapproved of and condemned them for. They discussed how engaging in these kinds of behaviors were problematic because they *"got into so much trouble"* with adults. Peer

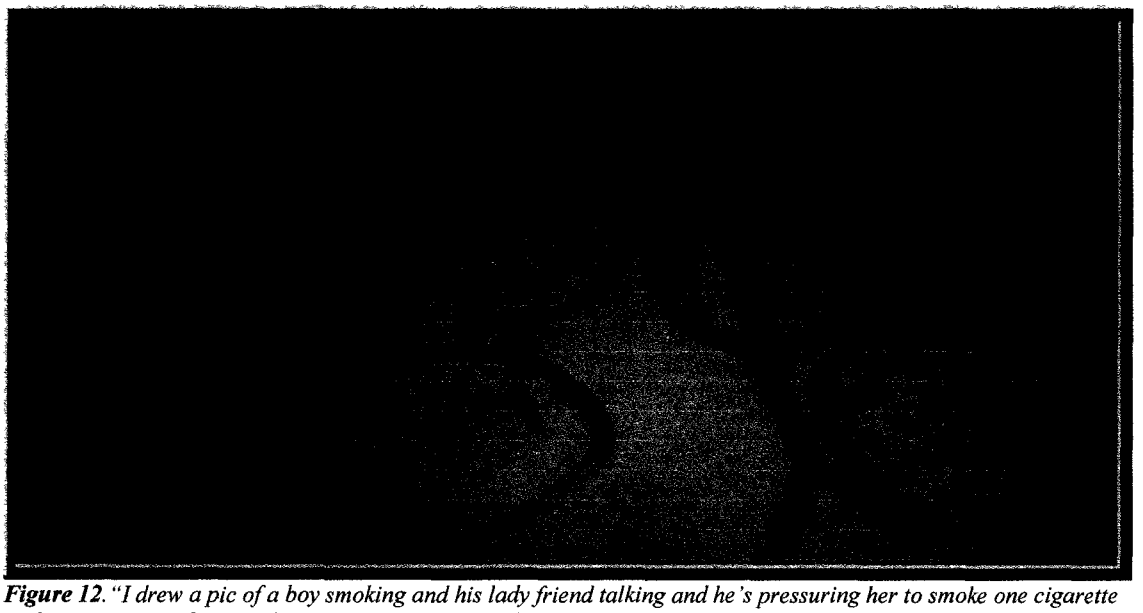


Figure 12. *"I drew a pic of a boy smoking and his lady friend talking and he's pressuring her to smoke one cigarette and it's not just girls it can happen to anyone but girls go under a lot of peer pressure when they're growing up so they make silly choices".*

pressure for some of the girls was also connected to body image and menstruation, where menstruation was viewed as impacting body image. Figure 13 is a picture one girl took to represent the essence of menstruation as part of their community. Largely connected to

Figure 13 *In this picture the girl is leaning over her purse on the side walk and a pad is sticking out of her purse*

this discussion on body image and menstruation was how boys negatively respond to girls changes and their self consciousness of body image. For example, the girls talked about the boys in their communities that have made fun of their weight or *"their changes"* as one girl put it.

Some of the girls took photographs of a girl climbing in a window and described this as a negative aspect of community (see Figure 14). They explained that climbing in the

Figure 14. *A girl climbing in the window of her home*

window was a way to enter their homes when they were locked out indicating an absence of caregivers and/or adults. One girl explained that she took the picture to demonstrate the negative things in her community but also needed to actually get in her home at that time.

All of the girls talked about unkindness and gossip as negative. For some, gossip devalued their reputation and was viewed as being resolved through demonstrations of toughness. For some of the girls, fighting took place over *"being bossed around"* other girls or sometimes over boys. Fighting involved conflicts with boys and one of the girls talked about beating up two boys. The girls talked about their anger and frustration in how boys think they are tougher than girls and call girls fighting *bitch fights*.

From focus group one, the girls' responses are very similar to Bottrell's (2008) work about supportive networks, where they indicate that community is about relationships and resources for support or spaces to have fun. Supports and having fun are highlighted through their use of their community centres, extra-curricular activities and school. In terms of the negative aspects of community, while the girls briefly talked about crime and delinquency, their focus was on: peer pressure, climbing in windows, unkindness and fighting, as well as the stereotypes and challenges they face with boys. From these discussions, From these discussions, I recalled particular literature that also had similar findings. Those themes involve: adult power (Ungar 2000; Schaffner 2006), relational as well as physical violence among girls (Phillips 2003; Jones 2004; Harris 2004), and patriarchal power (Artz 1999; Mayeda, Chesney-Lind & Koo 2001). In addition, racial differences started to emerge during the first focus group and became more pronounced when we moved into the second focus group on girls' success & social power.

Girls Success & Social Power

The second focus group was guided by girls' experiences of negotiating the risks they identify in their community. The specific focus was on the girls understanding of "success for girls in their communities" and "what they do when things get tough". Similar to the first focus group, we ate supper prior to the girls constructing their posters and they remained interested in constructing posters.

Similar to the first focus group, the girls constructed their poster boards using various styles. Some of the girls wrote on their posters to represent girls' success. For example, one of the girls wrote: *"don't make someone your everything because when they're gone you'll have nothing"*. Another wrote about her best friend and explained the things they do together and how much she enjoys her friendship. Some of the girls neatly arranged their posters with words describing each picture (see Figure 15, 16 and 17). Others had a collage of pictures, drawings or a combination of writing and pictures (see Figure 18, 19 and 20). One of the girls focused her poster on the popular vampire movie Twilight and of course, the main character, Edward (see Figure 21).

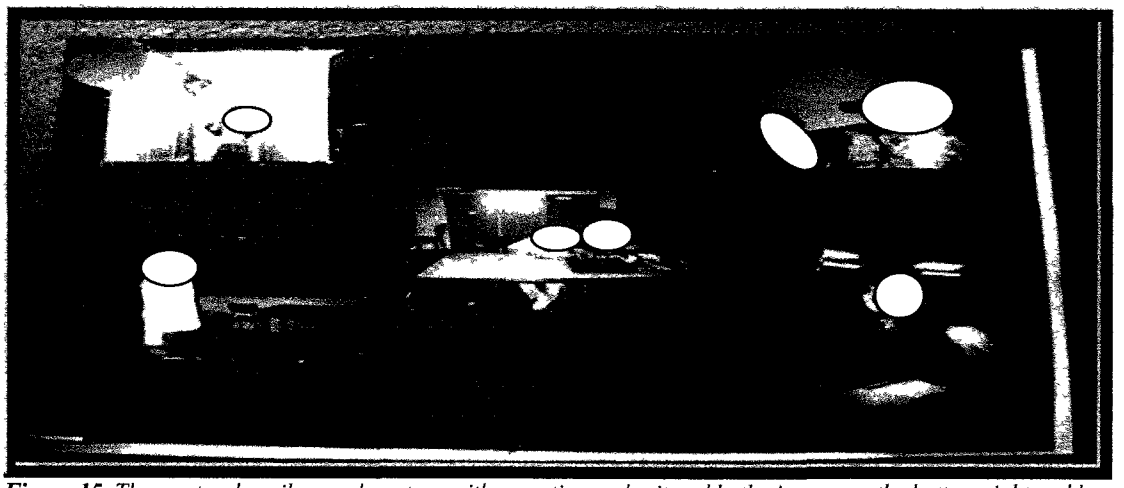


Figure 15. *This poster describes each picture with a caption under it and both pictures on the bottom right and bottom left represents posing (i.e. a model pose)*

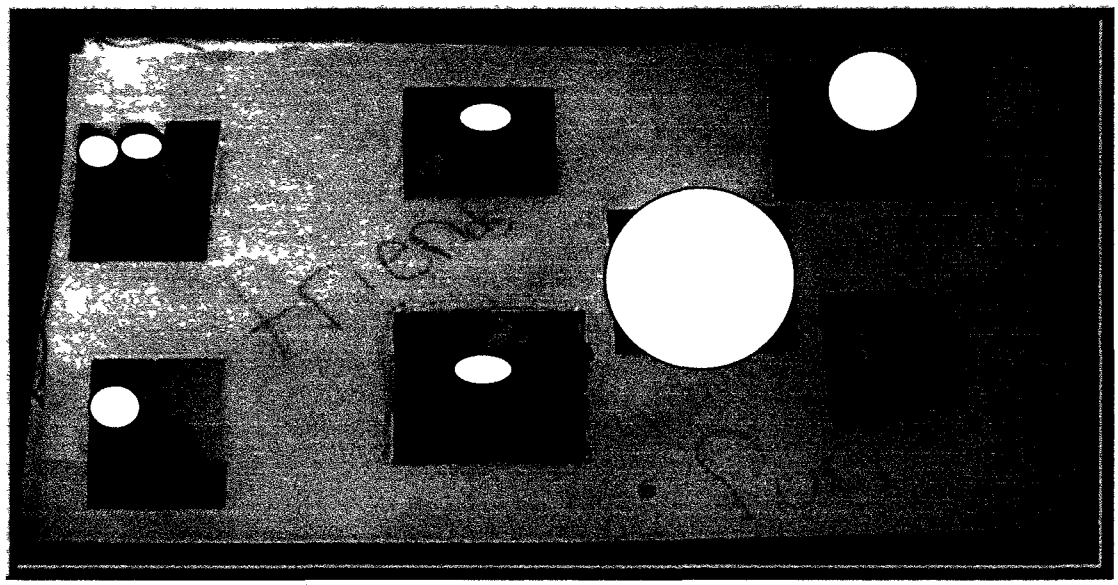


Figure 16. *The main themes of this poster are "friends", "fun" and "playing" The top left picture shows two girls holding the bags from our meetings and the middle bottom picture shows a girl holding a disposable camera from our meetings*

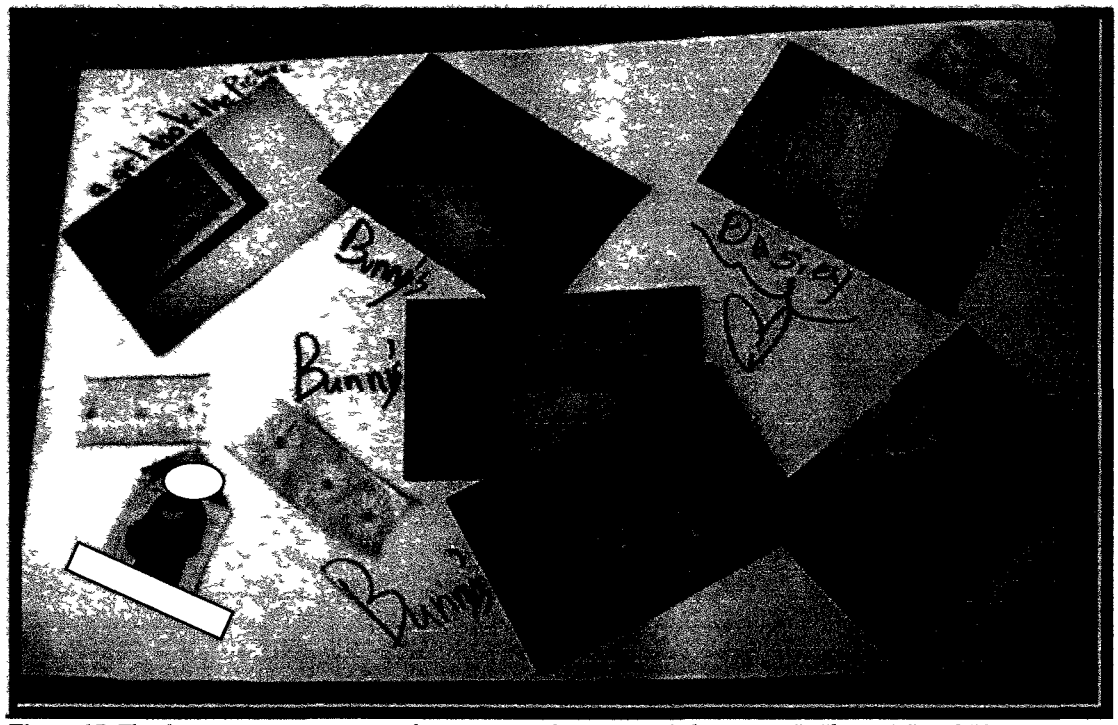


Figure 17. *The description statements in this poster read "a girs took this picture", "bunny's" and "Dasiey"*

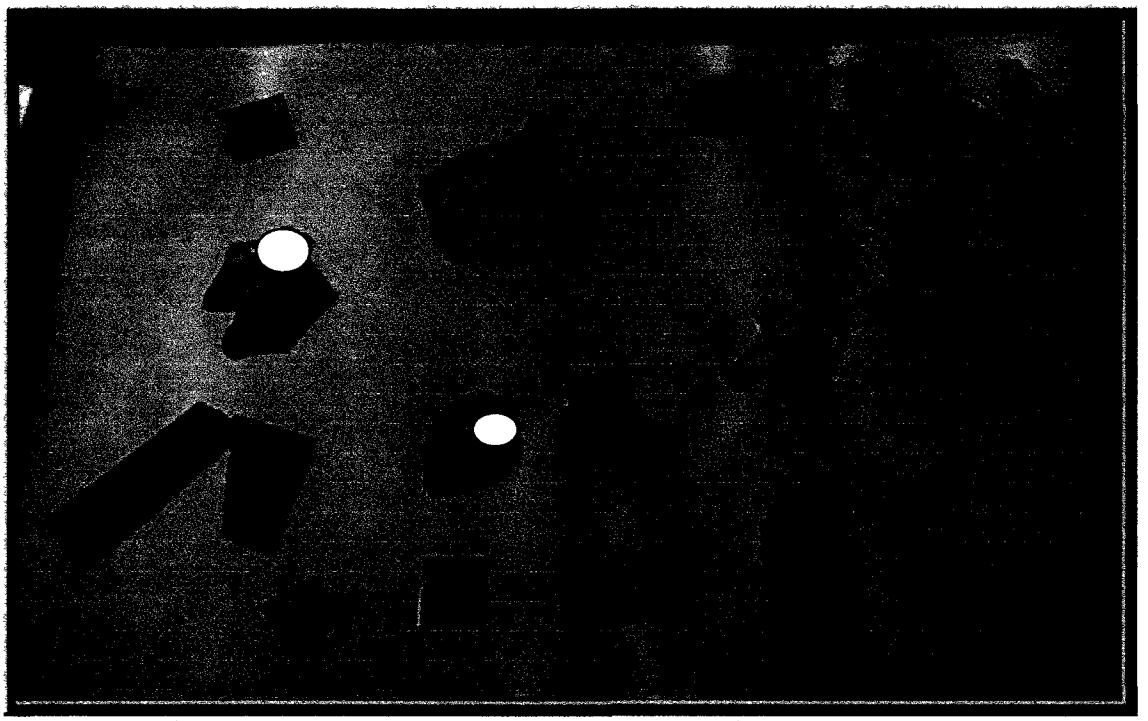


Figure 18. *Middle top picture says "today I will be still like a mountain", this is written on a white board at the girls school Left bottom corner is a picture of her math homework.*

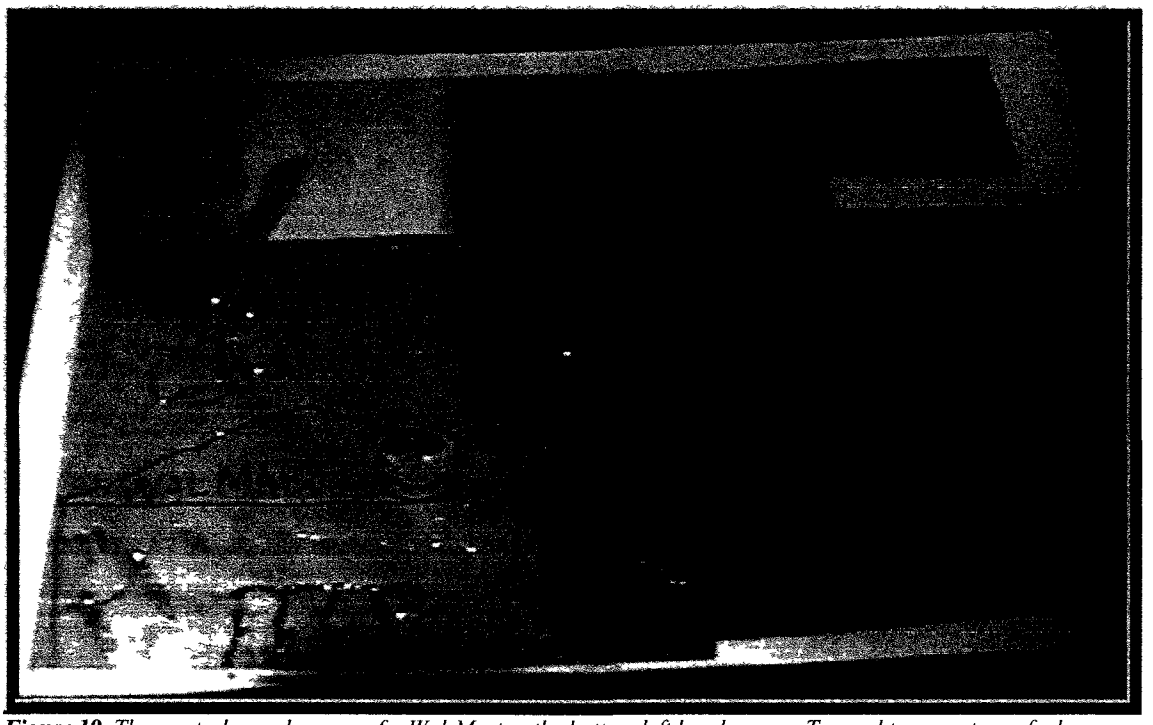


Figure 19. *This posterhas a drawing of a Wal-Mart in the bottom left hand corner Top right is a picture of a house with several people standing side by side Bottom Right shows a swing set and a drawing of a diary*

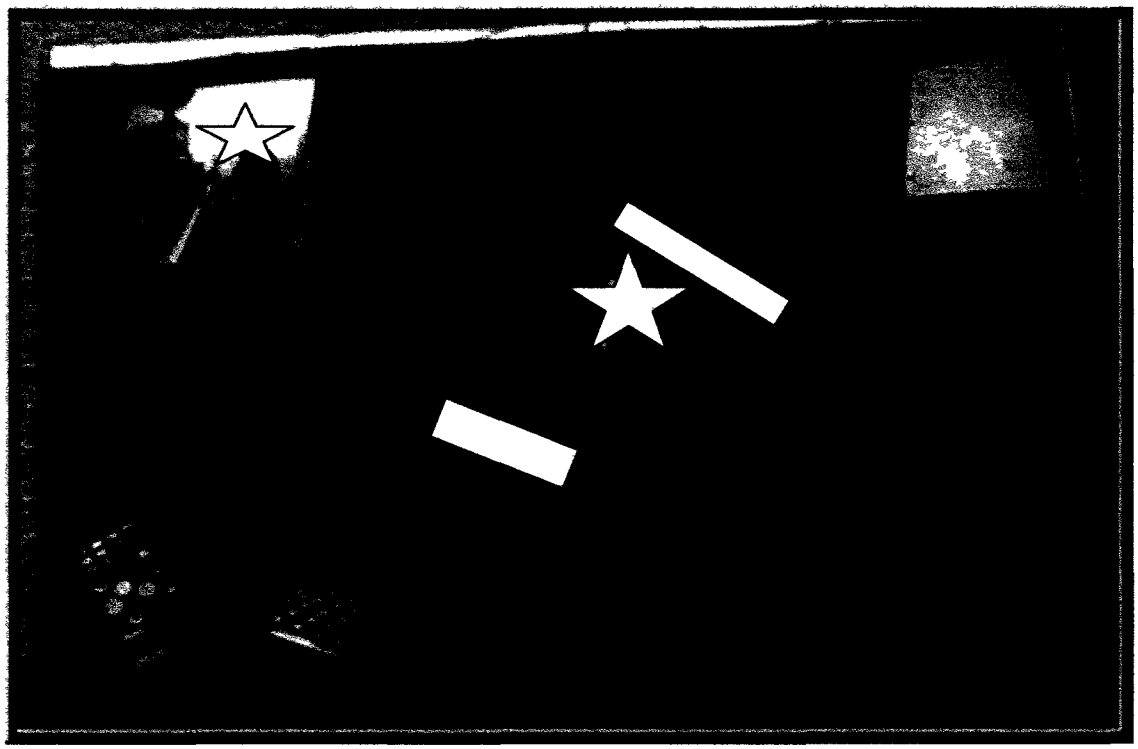


Figure 20. *Title "My Pics" Bottom left phrase "girls are successful by wearing makeup but not me" Bottom Centre "I write in my diary when things get tough (And maybe other girls too) Bottom right "girls get a broken heart from boys and they might write in their diary Top right "this is my homework and girls are successful when they get good marks (well i don't know about other girls but I am) Centre "and girls are successful by doing stupid ugly poses"*

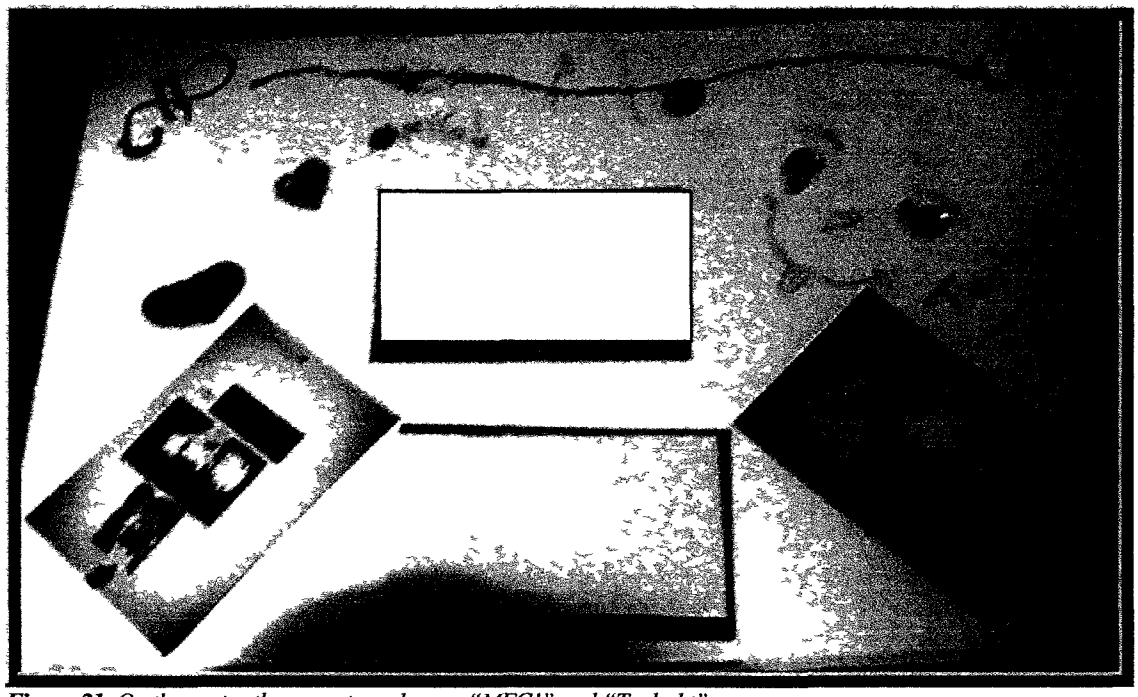


Figure 21. *On the poster there are two phrases "MFG!" and "Twilight"*

Success, for the girls was about future achievements such as having a job and a family. For instance, they said things such as: *"get(ting) a really, really good job"* or *"well it doesn't have to be a good job, it could just be a job."* When it came to family, some of the girls believed marriage, having a man in your life and children was a measure of success, while others believed they did not need a man in their lives to be successful. Part of future success for some involved school or education. For example, in Figure 20 the girl writes that getting good grades is successful to her. Success also meant having the ability to participate in various activities such as sports or cadets (see Figure 22 and 23) whereas, the girls stressed, this had not been the case in the past. Participation in sports and cadets was viewed as a contemporary activity for girls and it was now more acceptable for girls to be active.

Some talked about success as being happy, playing and having fun and discussed photos of themselves and their friends making funny faces as demonstrations of playing and having fun. Others talked about movie stars and famous singers as successful largely because

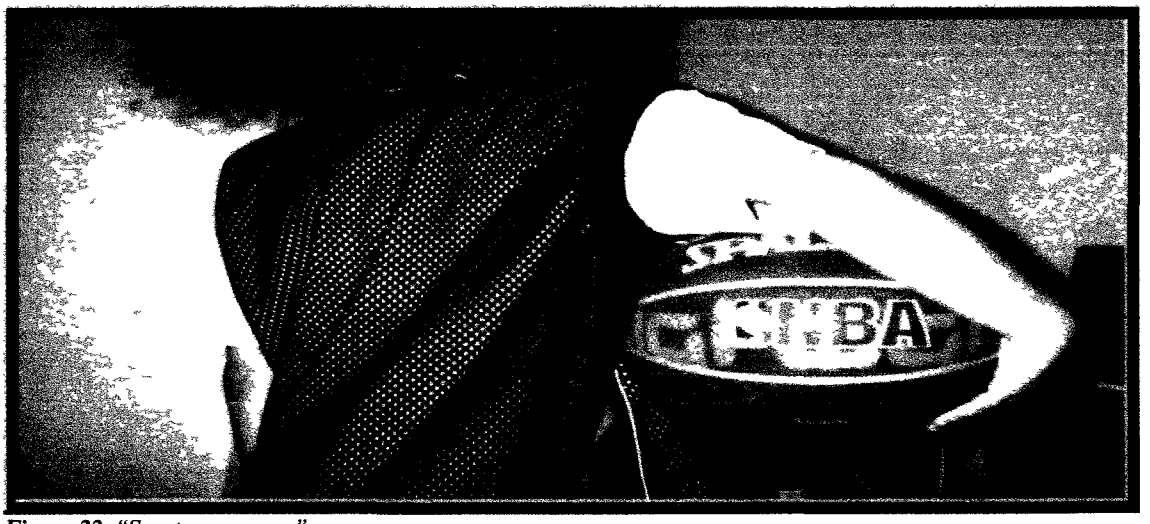


Figure 22. *"Sports as success"*

Figure 23. *"Cadet Uniform '*

they are well recognized and sell a lot of albums or movies. For instance, one girl said, *"Mariah Carey, she used to just be a singer with her friends and all, now look at her."* While much of what the girls discussed involved positive things that represent success, some of the girls talked about success as avoiding certain behaviors such as: being a drug addict, having kids at a young age, stealing and cheating. Some also discussed various marginal social situations where people can still be successful, even if they are poor, fat or thin, or homeless. For example, one girl said *"she* [referring to all girls] *could be a hobo...she could be a hobo and still be successful, like in the movie happiness, like he didn't have anywhere to live but he was successful."*

Aside from success, the girls engaged in discussions about "the things they do when things get tough". From the girls' responses, tough situations sometimes involved frustration and anger toward other people and their posters focused on a number of coping strategies. Most of the girls talked about writing in their diaries as an outlet for coping with tough situations. For example, Figure 24 and 25 shows pictures of one of the girls diary and what

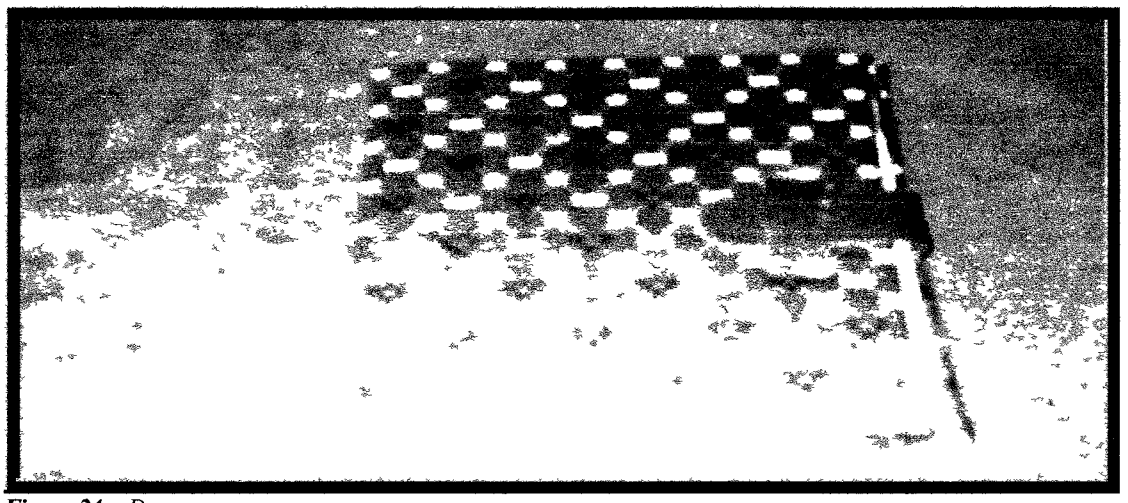


Figure 24. *Diary*

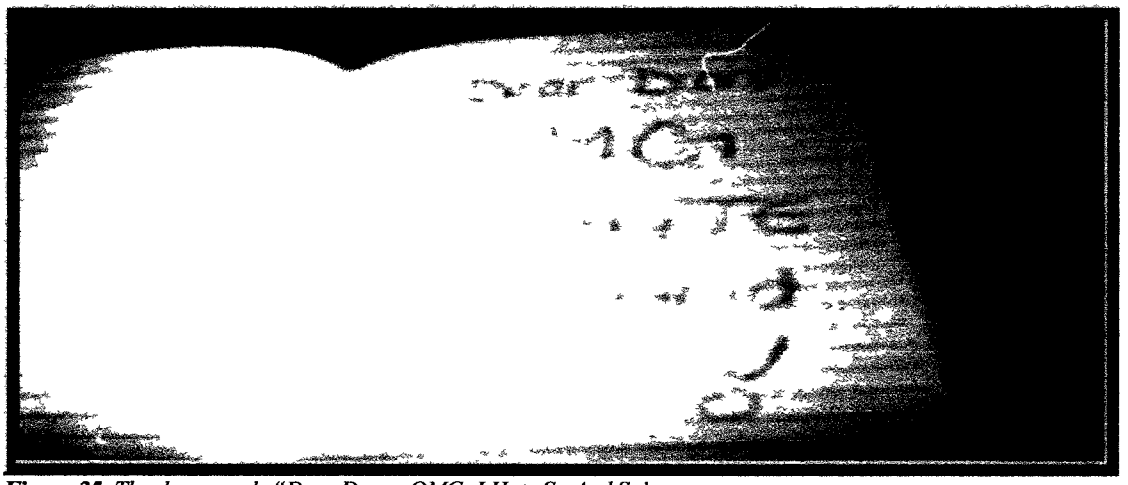


Figure 25. *The diary reads "Dear Diary, OMG, I Hate So And So'*

she writes in it. The girls also talked about writing poems, quotes and songs as an outlet for their frustrations. Another coping mechanism for the girls involved taking out their frustration and anger on objects such as yelling, hitting their pillows, breaking things, and one of the girls talked about a voodoo doll. For instance, the girls explained how they go about breaking things and using a voodoo doll: *"say you get something from somebody so you stomp it on the floor and say you don't want that thing anymore cause it's from that person"* and *"get a voodoo doll and pretend it's someone you really hate* [as she made poking motions]*."*

The girls also indicated that they go to places where they can think or cry or be angry, such as a playground or a field by their homes (as shown in Figure 19). Other girls talked about engaging in activities that take their mind of tough situations, such as watching TV. While many of the strategies were personal or individual, some involved physically fighting with other girls as a strategy. Figure 26 shows a picture one of the girls took and explained

Figure 26. *"Fighting"*

that: *"when things get tough this what you gotta know."* For these girls, fighting was something they are not supposed to do but something they have to do. Alternatively, some of the girls talked about more subtle interactions with others such as talking to the person they are mad at or talking to an adult such as a teacher or their parents.

The girls' responses about success and social power similarly reflects themes in other literature that discusses success in terms of socio-economic status (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind & Koo 2001; Taylor, Smith & Taylor 2007) and adhering or resisting to gendered norms (Harris 2004). In thinking about this literature, I interpreted the girls' responses as negotiating mainstream discourses of success and discourses about girl power. When things get tough, they find ways to cope that are safe; writing in their

diaries, taking out their frustrations on objects, fighting or talking to someone. These responses can be thought about as similar to Cahill's (2000) work that looks at the notion of cognitive mapping. There are important differences among the girls with respect to their understanding of success and their strategies for managing risk. These differences will be discussed in the chapters to follow.

Gendered Social Power

The girls' experiences with patriarchal power in relation to activities and space discussed in the third focus group were a consistent theme throughout all our meetings. Specifically, to probe the girls discourse about gendered social power they were asked to address what they viewed as "fun things girls and boys do", "places boys and girls hang out" and "interests' girls and boys have". In this focus group, the girls assisted with getting our supper ready and as we ate, the girls wanted to talk about me and asked me many questions about boys and school. Four posters were constructed for this focus group because more of the girls decided to engage in discussions about certain topics and/or their photos.

Two posters were constructed for this meeting and involved written text about the things boys and girls do for fun, separated into categories (see Figure 27 and 28).

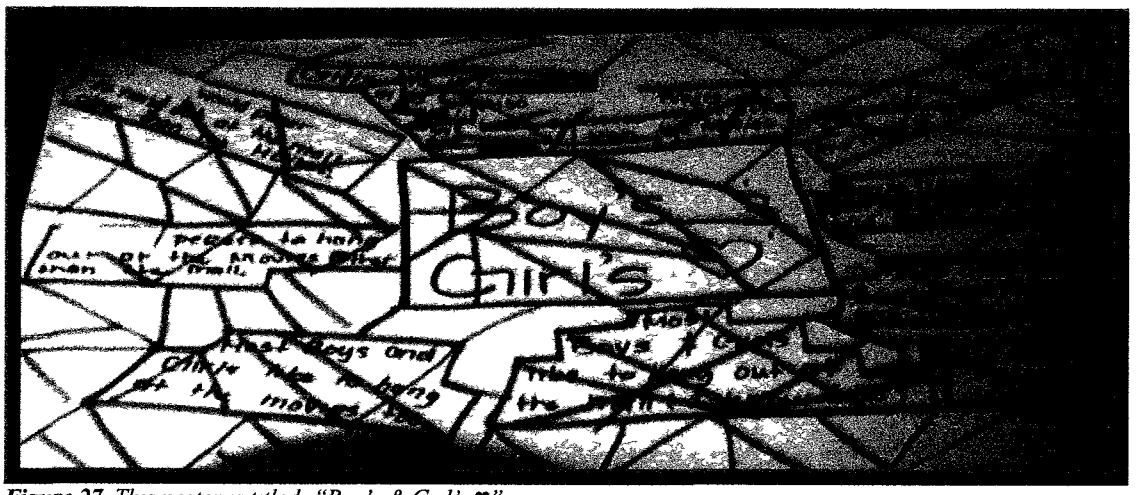


Figure 27. This poster is titled "Boy's & Girl's ♥"

Figure 28. Top left is about where boys and girls hang out at ' Top right describes girls & boys do lots of things for fun " Bottom right is about what "boys are interested in " Bottom Centre is about what "girls are interested in "

The girls' responses indicate that they are guided by stereotypical gender norms in the types of activities they take part in and places they go. Some of the girls discussed the activities boys do as opposed to girls such as playing video games in their rooms and sports. A couple of the girls explained that the super hero pictures on their brothers' wall (see Figure 29) would be scary at night and that they stare at video games a lot, which is something girls are not interested in. Aside from superheroes and video games, all of the

girls discussed how *"boys do everything and girls don't"* and *"boys do like every sport"*. In the context of

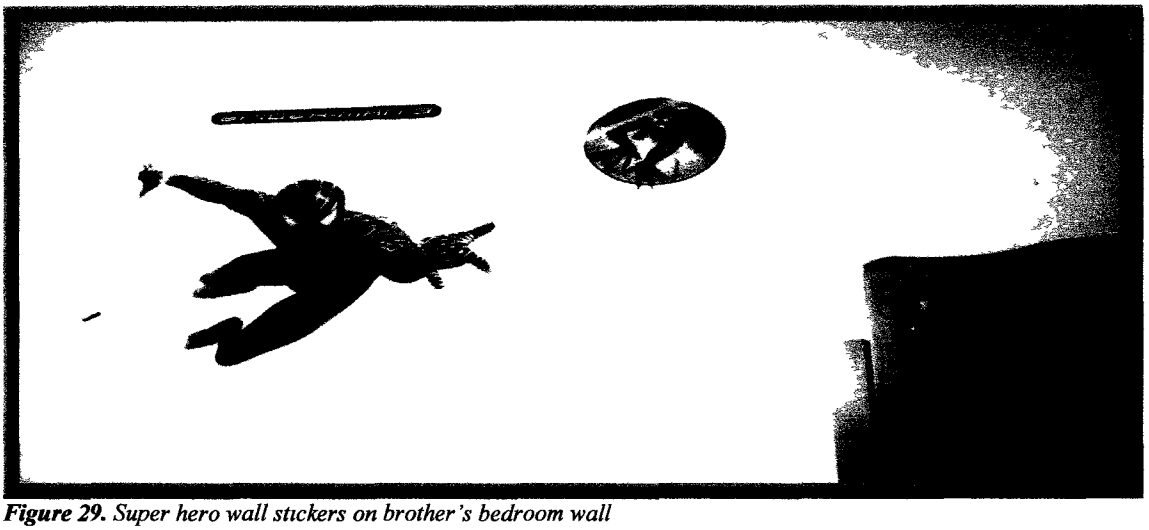


Figure 29. *Super hero wall stickers on brother's bedroom wall*

"boys do like every sport", the girls discussed how sometimes they hang out at the basketball court, but leave when *"the boys come"*.

Some of the girls talked about the activities girls and boys do together such as: going to the movies, the mall, restaurants, school, the centre, and the park. On the other hand, the girls also discussed what activities just girls engage in, such as: *the spa*, *asking boys out*, *babysitting*, and *doing chores*. Some of the girls discussed how girls love shoes (see Figure 31), shopping, and reading magazines (see Figure 30). The girls also talked about hanging out with their friends and talking about boys and texting each other. Aside from activities, the girls discussed a few places they hung out with other girls such as: around their

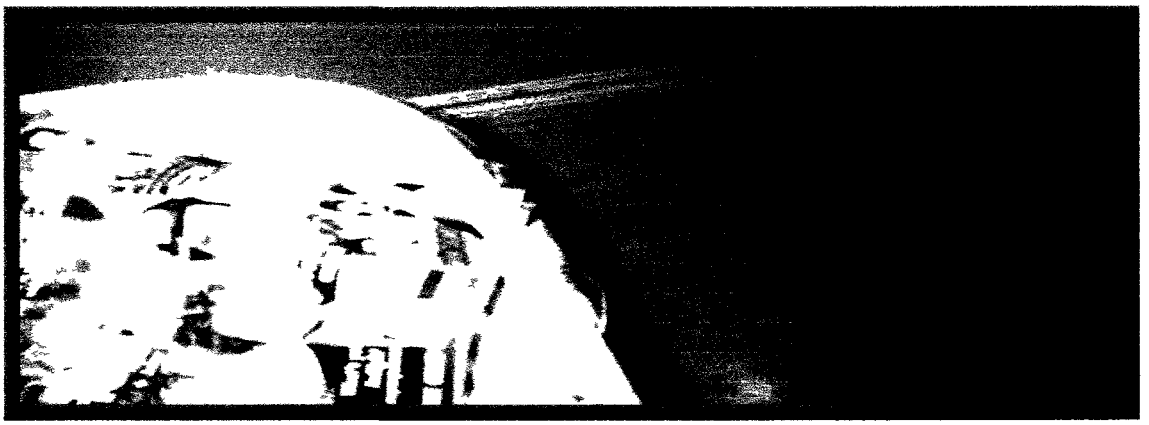


Figure 30. *Girls like magazines*

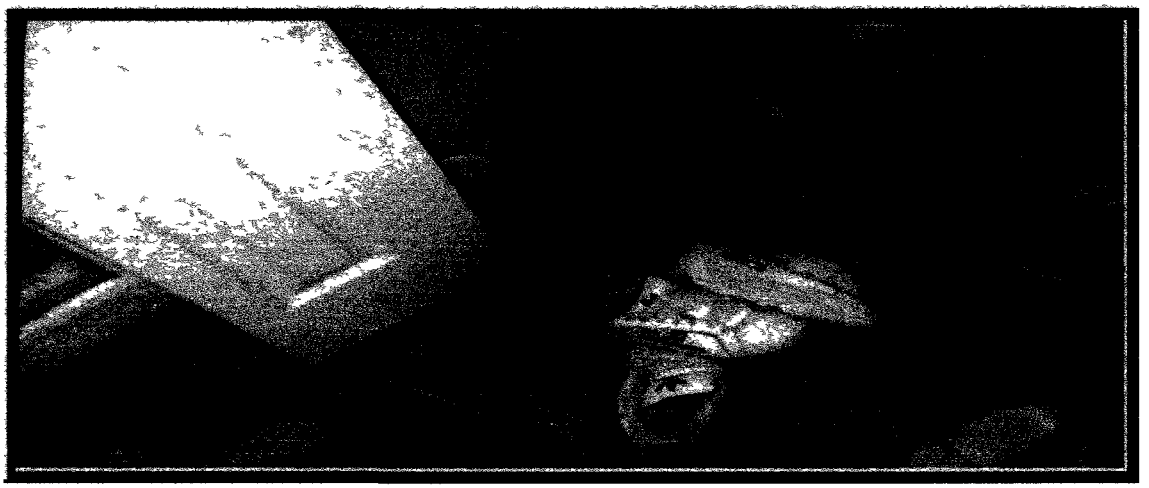


Figure 31. *"Girls love shoes'*

apartment building, at the local high school, outside of the grocery store, on their step, at a private school and a basketball court.

The girls' experiences of gendered social power began to appear in the first focus group and continued to be discussed throughout the second and third focus groups. Recall in the first focus group, some of the girls described their community centre as a place to engage in activities just for girls and that boys had more stuff to do in their community. Others described the way boys talked about girl fights as "bitch fights". Further discussions about fighting led the girls to explain that: *"boys think they're tougher than*

us cause they use all kinds of muscles and fists and eeerrrr (as she flexes her upper arms)." Another girl said:

> *most guys think they are tougher than us girls, they think we should be those kind of girls that run around in high heels and be like o my god, I broke a nail, and when were not like that they try to put us back in our place, but I'm sorry I'm not that way, I'm not going to take that bull-crap from anybody*

Although gendered social power was meant to be addressed in this particular focus group, it was a consistent theme throughout the girls' responses in all focus groups. Therefore, throughout all focus groups, I interpreted the girls' responses to mean that they experienced a lack of social power because of gendered stereotypes and expectations of boys, as well as patriarchal spaces following similar findings from other literature (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind & Koo; Artz 1997; Prinstein, Boergers and Vernberg 2001). While patriarchy is clearly felt as a limitation by the girls, their responses also reflect the things they like to do as girls such as shopping, reading magazines and texting. The kinds of things girls like to do was also discussed in the final focus group on girls' resilience & programming.

Girls Resilience & Programming

The last focus group on girls' resilience & programming was about learning from the girls what kind of program(s) they wanted. The central focus was on the girls' vision of a "program they would like to participate in" and "what that would look like". During this focus group, their responses began to tell a story about resilience that I had not anticipated at the proposal stage. The final focus group was different from the others, instead of photography and creating poster boards, I asked the girls to construct a mural.

Prior to constructing the mural and engaging in discussions, we ate pizza and salad and drank pop, and talked about what they liked and disliked about our focus groups. I learned that the girls really liked our focus groups, especially the photography and poster making. They told me they did not dislike anything, although they thought the camera video recording our discussions was weird but they did not really mind. After we ate and chatted, some of the girls decided to start their mural right away and brainstormed with each other before painting. Alternatively, some of the girls brainstormed about the kinds of activities they wanted with my facilitation. The girls then took their ideas and constructed their mural.

Some of the girls explained the meaning of their mural to me after they constructed it, while others explained the meaning they wanted their mural to represent prior to construction. Most of the girls were engaged throughout our entire meeting time, but one preferred to coordinate music requests while the mural was being constructed. All of the girls communicated well with each other to construct their murals and decided together where to paint images, words and what colors to use. The biggest challenge came from the enormous mess made with using paints. There was paint on the floors, the walls and all over the bathrooms from the girls washing their hands. Gladly, we cleaned up the mess together.

The murals were constructed as a collage of words, phrases, images and multiple colors (see Figures 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36). The girls' responses indicate that successful programs are about gaining access to social opportunities and having a space of their own to engage in activities that support empowerment. In terms of social opportunities, some of the girls talked about wanting to have more developed sports programs for girls that

included such sports as: basketball, volleyball, baseball, soccer and football. Some discussed having all girls' teams outside of school, while others discussed having all girl sport camps where they could learn and master the skills of a particular sport. Many talked about programs

Figure 32 *Snap shot 1 left side of mural A*

Figure 33 *Snap Shot 2 the right side of the mural A*

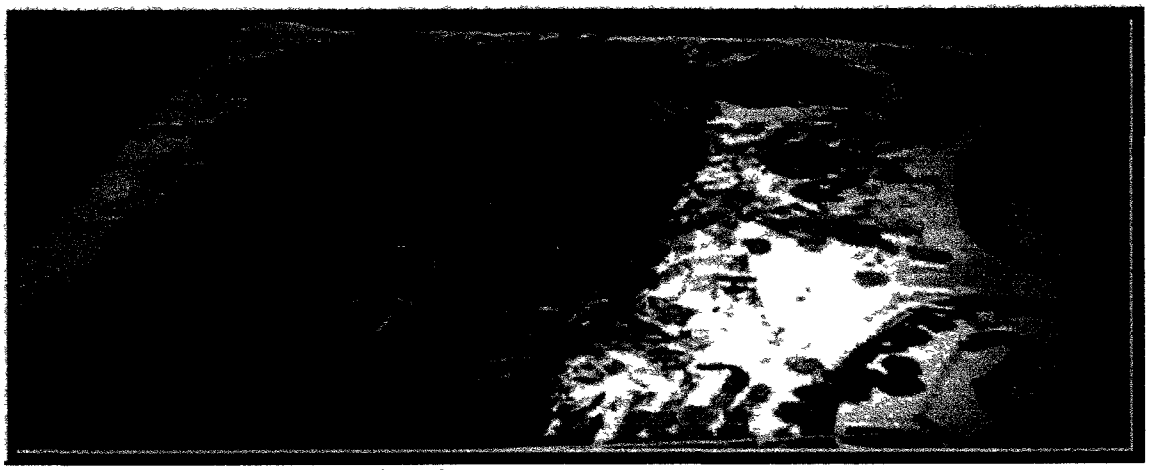


Figure 34 *Snap Shot 3· the left side of mural B*

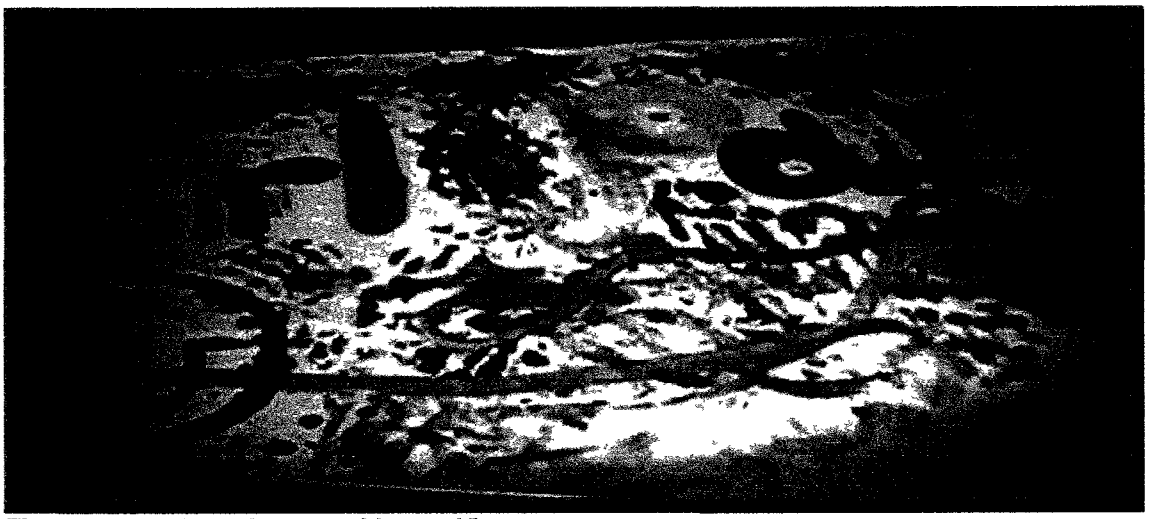


Figure 35*. Snap shot 4: the centre of the mural B.*

Figure 36 *Snap shot 5 the right side of the mural B.*

involving activities other than athletics such as: art or drawing, photography, playing games and water games.

While the girls discussed general activities, some of the girls' responses indicated they wanted a space to talk through things such as anger, frustration, success and boys. They also wanted to have a space to learn about various life skills such as nutrition and have a space to be messy where they are not worried about what boys think or what they are supposed to act like. Other girls' responses, quite differently, indicated that gaining access to social opportunities was important. The girls talked about wanting to go to a variety of places beyond their neighbourhood such as, the movies, the fair, and amusement as well as water parks. In describing their desire to "go places", the girls expressed concern about the cost of these kinds of things and rationalized the plausibility of other activities. For instance, they rationalized the viability of their community centre getting a pool by deciding the neighbourhood teenagers would smash it.

From the mural and discussions, I interpreted their responses as a resilient outcome that involved accessing space. Accessing space for the girls is about a place have power in being a girl such as talking or *being messy* and having a space that acts as a bridge to access social opportunities such as *going places*.

Discussion

The girls' images, posters and discussions tell stories about their understanding of community, the risks they experience within their community, their notions of success, experiences of gendered social power and most importantly, their resilience. Their

responses do not provide a united cohesive analysis; instead there are a variety of racial differences and dissimilarities in the girls' access to space and resources. In order to further explore these differences and develop a broader understanding of the themes raised by the girls and discussed in the literature, the next two chapters focus on these themes in greater detail and bring to the forefront the primary concepts involved in these themes; community, power and space; resilience, success and femininity.

Chapter Five

Community, Power & Space

This chapter analyzes the girls' perceptions of community and power. We first explore the girls' understandings of community and we will then look at the girls' perceptions of risks as being governed by struggles of power. I will highlight three main themes connected to struggles of power; these include adult power, girl-on-girl power and patriarchal power. From this analysis, a key theme connecting community and power emerges that involves the girls' understanding of community as relationships and resources that, in turn, provide their context for risk. Also, in this analysis the girls' experiences begin to show important differences along lines of race that are compared in terms of neighbourhood culture, proponents of community, and struggles for power.

Girls & Meanings of Community

The girls understanding of community involved a number of layers where they spoke to neighbourhood culture, geographical location, relationships, resources and spaces grounded in support. While they described their neighbourhood culture as violent and in the context of a geographical location, their focus was primarily on relationships, resources and spaces that offer support.

Girls & Neighbourhood Culture

Some of the girls described their community as violent: *"there's cops every time you look around"* or *"sometimes people really get hurt in our crusty little community."* In

a conversation with some of the girls, they explained the order of *baddest* communities in comparison to theirs:

> *R1: yeah in this community some people get shot, got killed, got mugged*
> *R2: It's word that their* [neighbourhood] *is baddest,*
> *R1: I'm not trying to say nothing but in* [community 1] *people get the R* [meaning rape] *word and the S* [meaning shot] *word*
> *R3: in* [community] *it's mostly just car-jacking*

Community, in this sense can be understood in terms of neighbourhood or a geographical location that encompasses violence. This is similar to research that looks at the code of the street in disadvantaged communities and important contributing factors to violent neighbourhood culture such as social isolation and segregation (Anderson 1999; Sommers and Baskin 1993; Jones 2004). Although many of the girls talked about violence in their communities, there were differences in their responses that reflected various levels of social access to space and were divided by race and experiences of neighbourhood culture.

Racial and neighbourhood differences became evident in the girls photographs and responses in our discussions. The black girls took photographs of spaces surrounded by fences and barriers (see Figure 37), while the white girls took photographs of open spaces (see Figure 38). These sorts of physical barriers, among the black girls' responses, appeared to be connected to social barriers reflecting neighbourhood cohesion that easily and readily were grounds to identify outsiders. For example, during our discussions some of the girls made it clear to other girls *"you've gone too far"* or *"you little rat, you shouldn't have said that"*, because they felt discussing certain things in my presence *"crossed the line"*, indicating a kind of insider/ outsider rule where neighbourhood

solidarity takes precedence over outsiders. This finding is parallel to the work of Jones (2008, 2004), Ness (2004) and

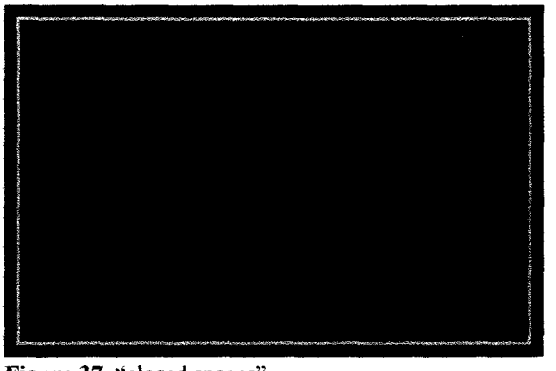


Figure 37. "closed spaces"

Figure 38. "open spaces"

Miller (2008) where social isolation among ethnic minorities creates limited access to opportunities and a different neighbourhood structure than that of mainstream middle-class, white culture.

Another reflection of insider status appeared in some of the girls posters when they wrote the name of their community on their posters. This is consistent with the work of Bottrell (2008) who interviewed girls from Glebe housing estate in Australia to learn about their identity discourses in relation to local risk discourses about their community. Bottrell's (2008) girls adopted *The Glebe Girl* (TGG) identity and embraced neighbourhood cohesion by "tagging" and finding comfort in their community. For Bottrell's girls, neighbourhood cohesion was a way to reject outsider labels such as *bad* or *deviant*. In contrast, there was no indication of this same kind of neighbourhood cohesion from the white girls' responses. It is important to understand that neighbourhood is part of the girls' community which is talked about in terms of common insider code among residents. Neighbourhood, however, is not their only sense of community. Underlying differences in cohesion along lines of race come from recognition of the

continuity of community as grounded in support networks involving relationships and constructive resources contextually relevant in the girls' lives.

Having a Sense of Community: Support Networks

Despite descriptions of neighbourhood culture, the girls' *sense of community* more often than not focused on supportive networks involving relationships and constructive resources. A supportive network for the girls involves a self-identified connection to important relationships in their lives and activities/ resources that offer practical and supportive skills, spaces and ways of being. Within these supportive networks, relationships and constructive resources carry different meanings along dimensions of race for the girls.

For the black girls, friendships were significant to their sense of community. Two posters constructed by the girls had writings about the significance of friendship:

> *"girls, girls they love to laugh and play; girls, girls they never stay in one place; they laugh and cry and sing lullabies; and girls love their best friend"* (see chapter four, page 58)

> "[she] *is one of my best friends. She is kind, nice to me. She loves what boys love, like basketball, football, and baseball etc. She never gets mad. We always think of good ideas to play. She thinks of the best places to go like the mall. P.S. my x-box 360. I can't explain how a good friend she is. I would explain but whatever I say she's better than that"*

These girls think highly of their friends as indicated in the responses: "I can't explain how a good friend she is. I would explain but whatever I say she is better than that" and "girls love their best friend." I also learned that friendship is a part of girlhood in their communities and that their friendships are significant because friends demonstrate a kind

of warmth, a common interest, think of ways to be mobile and provide a means to have fun.

Having fun with girlfriends was an important part of community for the black girls. In their response to what daily life is like in their community, the girls pointed to pictures of themselves and their friends in a basketball court (see Figure 39) and said: *"well, like, having fun"* and *"having fun, boys, hanging with your friends, going places, yeah."* Further probing about what they do in their community elicited an agreement among them when one girl said *"we hang out with our friends."* Hanging out with friends and having fun was also connected to their community centre because *"they got like activities just for girls and stuff"*. Activities just for girls included things like *"girls'*

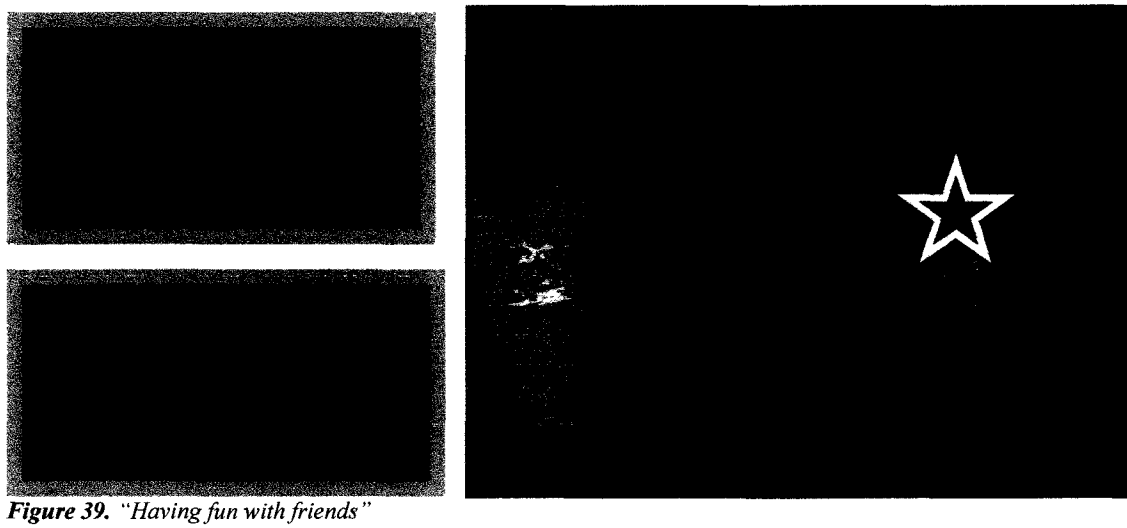


Figure 39. *"Having fun with friends"*

night and we learn how to play badminton", *"there's dance"*, *"jewellery program"* and *"drawing"*. Nonetheless, the girls also indicated these programs are not consistent at the centre. While the community

centre acted as a space where they could have fun together when girl programs were offered, in their community, they complained that: *"there's more stuff for boys around here."*

Apart from the community centre, the black girls also talked about extracurricular activities such as "basketball" and "taekwondo" as a significant part of their community. One of the girls drew a picture of a girl wearing a taekwondo uniform (see Figure 40) and indicated that taekwondo was a positive aspect of her community because: *"using taekwondo, but using it for the right reason, like say someone's trying to rob you, like in taekwondo we learn if someone grabs hold of you like how to get out."* For the black girls, community is about friendship, resources for girl space and resources for street knowledge. The black girls' sense of community coincides with Bottrell's (2008) work in the sense that neighbourhood cohesion was found in the TGG girls' friendships and community connectedness through insider/outsider status.

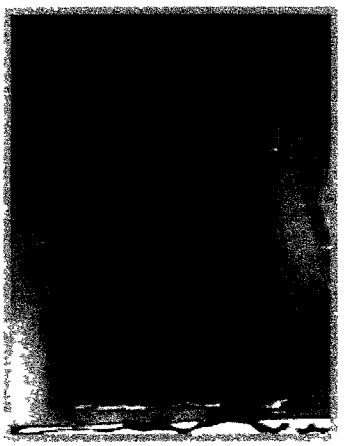


Figure 40. *"Taekwondo"*

Friends, for the white girls, were a part of their community, but they more focus on adult relationships. The white girls talked about the adults in their lives quite frequently and took many photographs of teachers and parents, while the black girls did not have any pictures of adults. For some of the white girls, adult relationships were significant to their school experience. One of the girls took a picture of her favourite teacher at school (see Figure 41). Another talked about her teacher being like a second mom to her. She said: *"my teacher, she like knows me and she's like practically another mom, like literally she's like practically another mom, and when I find when I get*

frustrated she'll take me into a different room and she'll talk to me." For these girls, having an adult relationship, especially with an adult who understands and listens to them, is important. One girl talked about her aunt as an important part of her community. She said: *"sometimes or most times I go for drives with my aunt because when I'm with her I can tell her anything."*

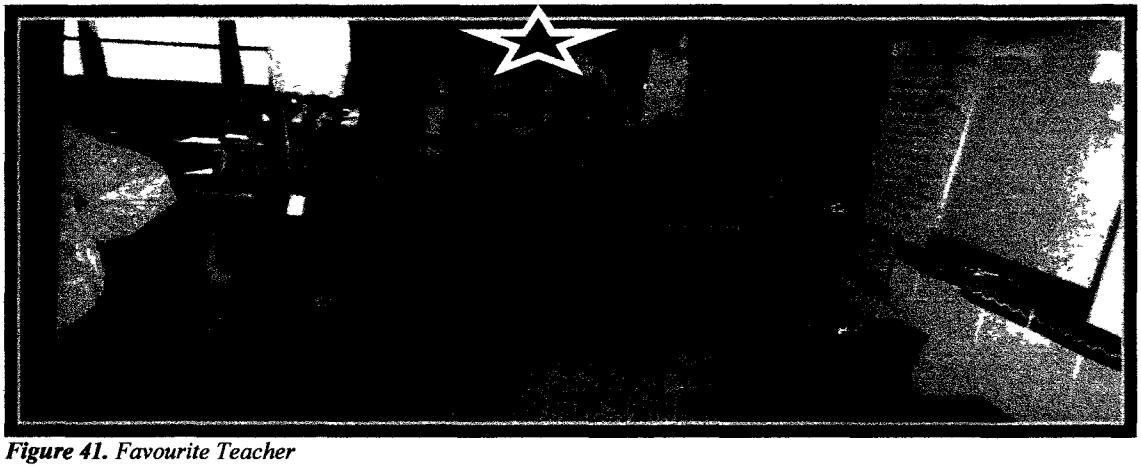


Figure 41. *Favourite Teacher*

While adult figures in the white girls' lives are significant to their understanding of community, community is also about resources for support that are sometimes related to adult relationships. For instance, when the girls discussed why the community centre is important to them; some of their responses were:

> *"because it gets the kids off the streets, and helps the parents so they can have some time away and it also helps some of the teenagers that helps them at that age so they*
> *don't do drugs or smokes or anything, so it's making a better place in our community"*
>
> *"I feel a lot safer here because I know I'm safe and that people can trust me"*
>
> *"like if you go here, they talk to us about peer pressure and how to understand not to do this and they teach us how to get better jobs so we can make more money and get a better education"*
>
> *"I come here (the centre) to get all my stress out"*

"because we have computers and outside and this [this research] *and tables and friends"*

Their responses indicate that community is about a source for support where they are provided with a means to release stress, get better jobs, get a better education, to feel safe and get the kids off the streets. They also talked about extra-curricular activities as a resource for support. One girl explained that: *"cadet's is really fun because when something happens to me they like have a social worker there that you can talk to."*

The white girls' responses are consistent with the OJJDP (2009) report *Resilient Girls*, which points out that one of the most significant protective factors for girls is having a caring adult in their lives. On the contrary, the black girls' responses indicate that their supports are their friends within the context of their neighbourhood culture. In this sense, the white girls' relationships with adults are found outside neighbourhood culture and this speaks to their greater access to relationships and resources beyond their neighbourhood.

Although girls' responses differed in important ways, all their understandings of community were different from their experiences of neighbourhood culture. Their sense of community is grounded in supportive networks involving spaces that offer girls a way to draw on relationships and resources such as community centres, extra-curricular activities and school. Given girls focus on relationships and resources as a source of community, the entities they viewed as risks involved barriers within this notion of community and not neighbourhood culture.

Girls & Community Risk: Stories of Power

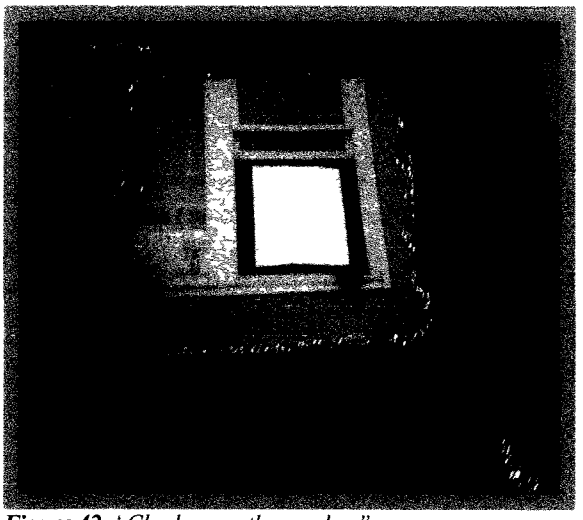
Underlying the girls' perceptions of risk were stories of power struggles that shaped hierarchal boundaries in accessing their supportive networks within these domains of relationships and constructive resources. While the girls defined risks as involving climbing in windows, peer pressure, unkindness and fighting as well as stereotypes and challenges with boys, the context of these risks were about power struggles. In particular, when girls talked about these risks, stories about negative encounters with adult authority, girl-to-girl struggles for autonomy and reputation as well as patriarchy emerged. Power in all three of these dynamics is related to space in both physical and theoretical ways such that in-accessibility to space shapes the girls powerlessness.

Stories of Adult Power

Stories of adult power emerged in the girls' discussions about the negative things they face such as needing to *climb in windows* and *peer pressure*. Discourses of adult power were different among the black and white girls, highlighting the absence of adult relationships in the black girls' sense of community and the white girls' focus on relationships with adults. For the black girls, getting locked out of the house indicates a story of adult power where the girls must rely on the adults in their lives to have sufficient access to the things adults take for granted like being able to get into your home. Oppositely, the white girls' struggles with adult power are about getting into trouble with adults that in turn, creates a fear of losing those relationships.

The black girls viewed getting locked out of their homes as negative and had photographs of girls climbing in a window on their posters (see Figure 42). One girl explained why she took the photograph: *"oh we just did that to take a picture and I had to*

get in my house." The significance of girls climbing in the window of their homes began to make sense when I had to make a number of trips to gather their cameras at the community centre because the girls were locked out of their homes quite frequently and could not access their cameras. Through this experience, I learned the community centre was also a safe space for the girls when they were locked out. This 'being locked out' suggests other reasons for



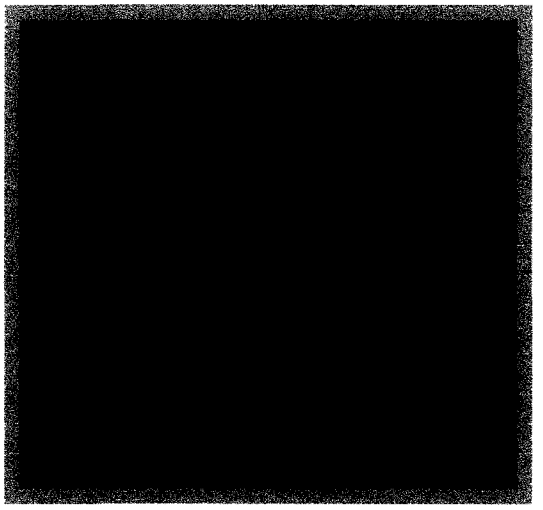


Figure 42. *'Climbing in the window"*

their presence in street culture other than literature that reported on family breakdown and the new economy of girl space (see: Pearce 2004; Burman & Batchelor 2009; Harris 2004). At the same time, this finding brings to light insights as to how adults regulate the domestic realm of girl space by lock and key.

In contrast, the white girls' focused on peer pressure as a negative thing they faced in their communities. One girl drew a picture about peer pressure for her poster (see Figure 43).

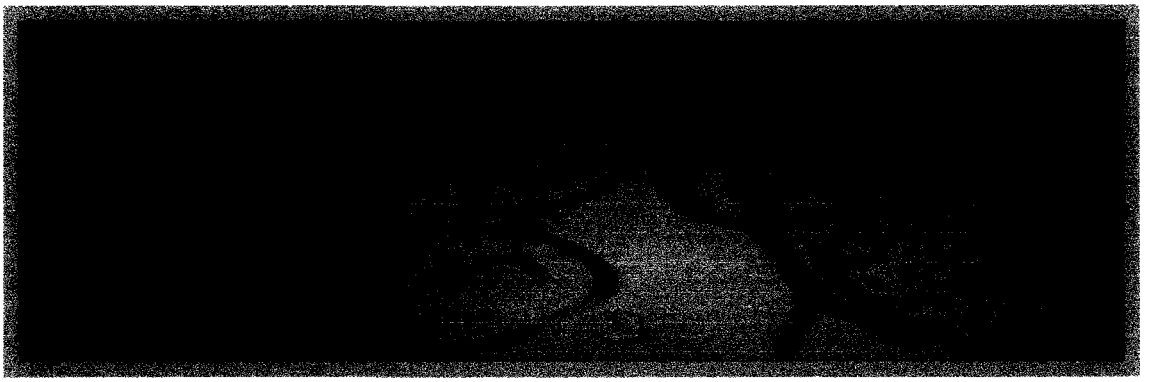


Figure 43. *"I drew a pic of a boy smoking and his lady friend talking and he's pressuring her to smoke one cigarette and it's not just girls it can happen to anyone but girls go under a lot of peer pressure when they're growing up so they make silly choices"*

For the white girls, peer pressure involved smoking and things such as: *"doing drugs because of peer pressure"* and *"there's running away, going to have sex, talking about guys and a lot of that stuff."* Even though peer pressure was largely seen as negative, after in- depth conversations with the girls it became evident that *getting trouble* with adults was a central theme in peer pressure talk. The girls said things such as:

> *"I snuck out of my house and went to my friends house and we had a party, and I got into so much trouble and I started coming here...I went to the centre before but I quit because me and my friends never got to hang"*
>
> *"as soon as I started coming here again* [community centre], *I actually felt more safe than I ever did, then at home or at anywhere else and my school; whenever I get into trouble like in grade 3, I got into a so called fist fight and I almost broke someone's wrists"*
>
> *"we both got sent to the office and she made it sound like I hit her in the back of the head with the bowl...although I didn't do anything and the principal knew because our teacher, we were doing this like, we were sort of making like these videos and she had the camera still on and she watched the whole entire thing"*
>
> "[after getting into trouble several time] *I haven't done a party yet without mom's permission"*

The girls valued relationships with adults and getting into trouble with adults appeared to be the essence of risk rather than engaging in peer pressure. Peer pressure is taught as a

negative part of adolescence by adults and this teaching is reiterated in the girls' responses when they explained the usefulness of their community centre:

> *"there is a lot of youth these days that are doing drugs because of peer pressure...and ever since I have been going to the centre peer pressure has been going away and I feel a lot safer"*
>
> *"it's* [the community centre] *not totally safer from peer pressure it's just safer from the peer pressure, like if you go here they talk to us about peer pressure, and how to understand not to do this, and they teach us how to get better jobs so we can make more money and get a better education"*
>
> "[the community centre] *helps some of the teenagers and that's also including* [program at community centre] *that helps them at that age so they don't do drugs or smokes or anything"*

This reiteration of adult teachings becomes evident in the girls use of *youth these days* and *the teenagers* where they displace themselves from this discourse and at the same time illustrate their experiences of negative peer encounters. Correspondingly, Ungar (2000) found from interviews with youth that peer pressure was a mythical concept used by adults to explain the problem behaviors of youth. The youth themselves indicated that engaging in similar behaviors and appearances of their friends, regardless of delinquent or non-delinquent labels, created a sense of personal and social power opposed to negative encounters. Instead of peer pressure as the *risk culprit*, the girls' responses indicated that peer pressure was an issue not in itself but rather because it negatively affected their relationships with adults in their lives. While it is recognized that a caring adult in girls lives is a significant protective factor (OJJDP 2009; Miller 2008), the white girls fear of losing a caring adult relationship seemed more important. Interestingly, this factor is absent from the risk literature.

While the risk literature does not specifically recognize girls' fears of losing adult relationships, it does speak to the devastating effects when caring adults are not present in girls' lives. The research on girls' delinquency has found that family disruptions such as losing a parent or other important adults are significant risk factors. For instance, Schaffner (2006) found from interviews with incarcerated girls that they often had 'empty families'[7] characterized by experiences of "divorce, overwork, substance dependence, incarceration, mental illness, ill health, homelessness, and death" (P. 87). Notions of 'empty families' for these girls were not only parents, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings. From Schaffner's (2006) work with girls, she points out that: "rarely do delinquency theories underscore the devastation to a child of losing a parent" (P. 88), this can also be said for other important adults in girls' lives (Simkins & Katz 2002). Others have also documented the devastating effect of incarcerated girls feeling rejected by their caregivers and lack of supervision (Rosenbaum 1989; Acoca 2005, 1999).

While the black girls have an absence of adults in their lives and the white girls fear losing adult relationships, both speak to hierarchal power imbalances between the girls and adults in their lives. These hierarchal power imbalances are different for privileged girls and those who are marginalized by class and space disadvantages. In Sanders and Mumford's (2008) research with privileged girls, power imbalances involved having to engage in programs their parents thought were best and they did not always like. They also found that the girls had strong feelings toward instructors or coaches who

[7] Schaffner (2006) defines empty families as: "...are peopled, but are worn down, fighting their own battles, with little access to social, cultural, and economic capital, and simply unable to provide the protection and guidance their daughters need" (P. 87).

accused them of not trying, thought they were no good at an activity or who yelled at them. These girls were purposefully enrolled in after school and extracurricular activities by their parents who chose activities for them to occupy their time and learn skills, sometimes involving 10-15 hours a week. This illustrates that, in contrast to marginalized girls who experience an absence of adults, privileged girls are intensely pushed by adults to spend their time constructively in the company of adults. Furthermore, while marginalized girls fear losing adults from getting into trouble, privileged girls have strong feelings of aggravation towards adults who give them trouble by accusing them of not trying or who yell at them.

Given the girls limited power in relationships with adults, they often sought out power in relationships with their friends. In contrast, some literature has pointed to power imbalances based on gendered norms between girls and boys that are enforced by adults as underlying a shift for privileged girls to seek out power in friendships (Gonick 2004; Campbell 1993; Gilligan 1993; Crowley Jack 1999; Crothers, Field and Kolbert 2005). Similarly, the literature on gangs suggests girls shift into friendship circles which offer a sense of support that is lacking in relationships with adults, primarily families (Miller 2002, 2001). While the girls in this study are not gang members, the gang literature helps to understand their shift to seeking power in friendship networks.

Struggles of Power in Girls Friendship Networks

"Friends will laugh at you, Best friends will laugh cuz they're the ones that tripped you"

- Quote from one of the girls

Underlying the girls' friendship networks, in the context of risk, are struggles for power that take place through behaviours such as being bossed around, dirty looks, being mean, and getting made fun of. These behaviours were not separate entities from adult power for the girls. They often talked about adult-discourses that prohibited *"doing things you're not supposed to*" and *"you're supposed to walk away from fights."* Nonetheless, the girls' everyday realities did involve fighting that entailed a hierarchal struggle. These behaviours were presented in the focus groups as a negative aspect of community and differentiated along dimensions of race where self-autonomy and reputation became the point of difference.

Struggles of power for the white girls derived from feeling bossed around in relationships with their friends. They said things such as:

> *"I have a friend and whenever I do anything or she does anything I am like just stop, but she just gets like really mad, and she just starts giving me dirty looks and tells all my friends to 'don't hang with her' and stuff, and I go up to her and am like 'what's wrong' and she's like 'just go away from me', and she starts giving messages to people and to people to tell me"*
>
> *"I was talking to my friend about making plans to go see a movie and out of the blue she just hits me in the back of the head with a bowl, for friggin no apparent reason, she wasn't even joking. I asked her 'were you joking', she goes 'no'. I was like 'what was it for then?'. She goes 'just for fun'. So, I walk away and she kicks me. I was like 'what was that for', and then she goes 'I wanted your attention'. 'You don't kick me in the back of the knee cause I can hurt myself'. She goes 'oh well'"*

Girls experiencing "dirty looks", telling friends not to hang with them and engaging in hurtful actions to get attention are things that can be seen as generating feelings of powerless. Within these discussions, this was confirmed when they said: *"you should never let your friends boss you around, if they start bossing you around you should walk*

away cause they can put you into peer pressure that way" or *"I couldn't deal with anybody bossing me around."*

While the white girls talked about being bossed around, all the girls discussed this kind of behaviour as sometimes escalating into physical violence. One of the girls described a fight she got into because a friend was bossing her around:

> *she went behind my back and told this girl me and my ex still go out and she got friggin mad at me and sent me into walls and I had a bruise for like a week, so I slapped her across the face cause I'm not putting up with anybody pushing me around*

Some of the girls also talked about a fight they witnessed involving a weapon. The girls said, *"some girls in* [community] *try to stab people."* They explained that one girl wanted to stab another *"because she was being mean."* Apparently she *"was playing around with the basketball and then* [another girl] *comes over and starts getting all mad"*. These responses to others being mean become serious and threatening at times.

The black girls told stories about *gossip* and *rumours* that challenge their reputations and made comments such as:

> *"I remember we were going down to (a girl's) house because she was making fun of us, I remember (girl), I remember we got so mad...cause I wasn't scared I waited outside"*
>
> *"girls get mad and say they're going to beat you up and stuff...and then you wait outside in the rain and they don't come"*
>
> *"a girl wanted to fight me so then she just looked at me and got scared"*

These responses indicate that reputation is a powerful entity, it is sufficient to inspire fear and ridicule is a challenge to reputation necessitating defence. Similarly, defending a tough reputation is considered important.

These findings are consistent with the work of Phillips (2003), Jones (2004), Miller (2002) and Batchelor (2005) who found a tough reputation is valued by marginalized girls; whereas, consistent with the work of Harris (2004), the white girls found power in self-autonomy where girls independence is culturally valued. When either sense of power is challenged, it can result in fighting because losing that sense of power is essentially a risk. The girls largely focused on girl-on-girl power struggles and explained that fighting takes place because: "*I think we get into fights because we can't help our anger*" or *"you get really angry and you can never stop."*

While being angry was the main reason for fighting, they also discussed other rationales for fighting with girls. The girls indicated that fights also happen over friends liking the same boy. In a discussion about fighting one of the girls explained: *"she wants to beat you up because you like* [boy] *or something."* When two friends, however, like the same boy, it can be ok if control is maintained, one of the girls explains: *"she (best friend) has a crush on him too, but I literally don't care, I gave her permission to like him."* These responses suggest that girls negotiate power in ways that mark their territory or control other girls, consistent with the work of Landry (2006) who found that this implicit *boy rule* exists in girls' friendships.

While the behaviours such as being bossed around, receiving dirty looks, others being mean, being made fun of and triggers for fighting such as the implicit boy rule, are often characterized in the literature as 'meanness' (Gonick 2004; Simons 2002), this was not the case in this research. Instead it can be viewed as struggles for power. The meanness literature problematically relates this behaviour to girl culture and hardly associates it with boy behaviours. Thus, using the term 'meanness' further contributes to

the overladen use of the word, where simply unkind behaviour is more appropriate. Additionally, despite this discourse, the girls discussed boys as also demonstrating a significant source of risk in their stories about power struggles.

Patriarchy & Body Sanctions: "Boys start rumours too"

For the girls, things such as rumours and gossip are not gender specific, instead they indicated that: *"boys start rumours too, you know."* Boy's unkind behaviours were described by the girls as involving *"inappropriate jokes"* and *"spreading rumours"* that devalue their bodies. These behaviours take place in spaces the girls utilize within their support networks such as schools, community centres, and in street culture. One of the girls explained in a short journal entry: *"I took a pic of a boy because at my school there are two boys that are very rude to all the girls because of what they're wearing or their changes."* Being made fun of by boys was part of the negative things the girls faced. In a conversation with some of the girls, they explained the kinds of inappropriate jokes boys have said to them:

> *R1: well* [boy] *and everyone here knows him and he said um 'how does* [girl] *put her belt on?', 'with a sling shot'*
> *R2: no actually it was a boomerang and he said if he threw a TV at me it would spin around me because I have my own orbit, he thinks I'm fat, when I'm only like a size 14*
> *R1: he keeps on calling me a dirty Mexican and he says my parents are from Sesame Street and they call me a muppet*

Aside from inappropriate jokes, some of the girls talked about boys starting rumours. In one instance, when I asked them "what girls do for fun", they discussed a specific rumour about a girl masturbating:

R1: they play with themselves; I know they play with themselves because [girl] *said they play with themselves*
R2: I'm not trying to be mean but people start rumours about [girl]
R1: I don't
R2: [boy] *said like* [girl] *plays with herself at night*
R1: well it's kind of true that people are spreading the rumour
R1: they were playing a game, they were playing truth or dare and then [girl], *it's inappropriate*
R3: it was a dare
R2: she could have said consequence
R3: that game had no consequence

The girls' responses indicate that boys' unkindness is largely directed toward girls' bodies as evident to them through boys' inappropriate jokes about weight and hygiene as well as rumours concerning sexuality. This is consistent with the work of Artz (1997); Prinstein, Boergers and Vernberg, (2001); Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olsen and McNeilly-Choque (1998); and Putallaz, Grimes, Foster, Kupersmidt, Coie and Dearing (2007) who found both boys and girls engage in similar unkind behaviour. However, the girls in my research talked about a specific kind of unkindness by boys directed toward girls, that of body sanctions. Boys engaging these behaviours toward girls linguistically massacred their bodies thereby devaluing them and as the girls put it *offending* them. While body sanctions are significant in girls' discussions about boys' unkindness, another important and dominant theme emerged about boys' misogynist attitudes and hegemonic claim to space.

Boys Privilege- Girls Problem: "Bitch-Fights" & Space

The girls talked about gendered power imbalances in their lives that created significant feelings of inferiority. These feelings of inferiority were described differently by the white and black girls. The white girls talked about boy's misogynist attitudes;

whereas the black girls talked about boy's hegemonic claim to space. In both cases, boys' privileged position in gender interactions was problematic for the girls.

In talking about boys' misogynist attitudes, the white girls continuously became animated and demonstrated strong emotional reactions toward boys devaluing them. They explained that boys describe girl fights in a degrading manner:

> *R1: normally it's like bitch fights and everything*
> *R2: for just girls*
> *R1: they call it...slapping, pulling hair*
> *R3: girl fights basically. That's what boys call it, bitch-fights like cat-fights*
> *R4: I don't think that word should be in them*
> *R5: my teacher, if like a whole bunch of girls get into a fight, and the boys are like 'bitch-fight, bitch-fight', she'll like say, they're not female dogs, and then the boys are like backing up*

Their reference to bitch-fights further indicates the importance of space and community inclusion of relationships with teachers. It also indicates that this space is not governed only by relationships they view as supportive, but that is also a misogynist space.

The girls clearly expressed their dislike for the term "bitch-fights" and further explained why they think boys use that kind of language:

> *"well, boys think they're tougher than us cause they use all kinds of muscles and fists and eeerrrr* [as she flexes her upper arms]*"*

> *"I am very tough, I beat up two boys before and they were like big and muscles, I am like sorry I ain't taking this from you, most guys think their tougher than us girls, they think we should be those kind of girls that run around in high heels and be like o my god, I broke a nail, and when were not like that they try to put us back in our place, but I'm sorry I'm not that way, I'm not going to take that bull-crap from anybody"*

> "[following the comment about o my god I broke a nail] *I have no nails, so I can't do that, and I can't contemplate this* [how boys think girls should act] *for the rest of my life* [as she gets up out of her chair and heightens her voice in a sarcastic tone]*"*

For the white girls, boys' misogynist attitudes contributed to feelings of powerlessness, but in this regard challenge gendered power imbalances in the spaces they consider community.

Differently, the black girls talked more about boy's hegemonic claim to space and activities. While they expressed a fondness of hanging out at the basketball court, they also talked about limitations to actually using the court:

"I barely even hangout there, I only go there certain times...when there's like nobody there or when there is certain people there like my friends, I play"

"then the boys come and sometimes I just leave...I just leave cause I don't want to stay there"

For them, boys' lay claim to this space. The black girls indicate gendered power imbalances in terms of access to space and opportunities. In asking "what boys can do that girls cannot", the black girls said:

"boys, do like everything, girls don't"

"boys do like every sport"

"there's more stuff for boys around here like football and stuff"

"you can't join the boys basketball team"

"play on the football team"

"they can take their shirts off and play sports, girls can't"

In asking these same girls the reverse "what can girls do that boys cannot", they said:

"girls show some cleavage"

"wear bras"

"girls can grow boobs"

"girls can have babies and boys can't"

Unlike the white girls who expressed feelings of anger and frustration about boy's misogynist attitudes, the black girls struggled to think of ways they had power in comparison to boys. Instead, the only power they recognized for themselves was biological and closely related to woman's capacity to bear children, while boys' were seen to have power and privilege in the context of space and activities. Their responses suggest that larger social scripts about gender guide the kinds of things they have access to, for instance, liking football but not having a team. This is consistent with the work of Mayeda, Chesney-Lind and Koo (2001) where they found girls to have many athletic and academic interests but no monies or resources were allotted by their schools or other sources to support a pursuit of those interests.

Discussion

Significant themes about community and power are evident from the girls' discussions and art work. Community was talked about in terms of support networks shaped by relationships and constructive resources, while, neighbourhood culture was shaped as their experiences of crime, violence and for the black girls, neighbourhood cohesion. That is not to say that, neighbourhood culture and community are always separate entities. Sometimes they are connected as in the black girls' experiences of unkindness and fighting.

Because community was more about relationships and resources for the girls, their understandings of risk were directly related to that sense of community. Community risks identified by the girls indicated struggles for power that pertained to three main themes:

adult power, girl-to-girl power, and patriarchal power. Within stories of adult power, risks were about the accessibility of space (i.e. climbing in the window) controlled by adults and the fear of losing adult relationships (i.e. experiences of peer pressure and getting into trouble). Unlike adult power, girl-to-girl power struggles were indicated through stories about being bossed around, dirty looks, being made fun of and gossip. The culprit risk factor in these situations concerned challenges to reputation and autonomy leading to attempts to preserving reputation and maintain autonomy, sometimes resulting in fights for respect with other girls. Lastly, through discussions about boys telling inappropriate jokes, starting rumours about girls, using misogynist language (i.e.bitch-fights) and having a wealth of space in comparison to girls, gendered power struggles emerged. While the girls' notion of community and risk is necessary to understand the context of their resilience, it is essential to further explore their cultural ideologies about success and strategies for coping to make sense of what resilient outcomes mean and processes they engage in to be resilient.

Chapter Six

Resilience, Success & Femininity

This chapter analyzes the girls' discourses about success that inform resilience themes based on their experiences of community and stories of power. This leads to a discussion of girls' resilience that is shaped by their negotiations between space and success as they are mediated by girls' perceptions of community and femininity. We will revisit some of the themes in chapter five that in addition to defining the girls perception of risk, also speak to their processes of resilience. Throughout this discussion, stories of resilience are analyzed in the context of social power in girl culture that is marked by important racial differences and resistance as well as conformance strategies.

Status & Femininity: Successful Outcomes

Through a constructionist lens, resilience represents a negotiated process between a person's social location affecting access to resources and how he or she defines their own success (Ungar 2004, 2005a, 2005b). In responding to questions about success, the girls engaged in cultural discourses about economic and social achievements as well as gendered practices. Their views of success sometimes accept, reject and contradict mainstream discourses about socio-economic status and femininity. Although some similarities exist for the girls in my research and the larger social discourse, interesting notions of strength and success that challenge risk and mainstream discourses emerged.

Negotiating Mainstream Discourses of Success

The girls described what they viewed as success in ways that speak to their social location and what they strive for within the limits of mainstream discourses. According to their responses, success is represented differently among the white and black girls. While the white girls aspire to mainstream discourses of success, they experience classed struggles but still adopt the view that success has no limits where anyone can be successful. For the white girls, success was described in terms of consumerism, middle class occupations, education and ambition. In regard to consumerism they viewed tangible entities and possessions that are of quality as success:

> *"you can have a house and have a car, you can have food in your mouth, clothes on your back"*
>
> *"have nice sneakers"*
>
> *"have nice clothes"*

While having nice things was successful, they also described the means to success as *"get(ting) a really, really good job"*. For the white girls, having a good job involved occupations such as: *"a lawyer"* or *"a doctor, like if you're in a hospital, a veterinarian, a massage therapist"*. In these responses, it is apparent that the white girls' notion of success is comparable to middle class, mainstream discourses that are consistent with Harris's (2004) 'can-do girl'. In other words, the white girls aspire to the can-do possibilities of success. Nonetheless, they also described experiences and views related to class struggles in attaining mainstream can-do success that speaks to how they negotiate their class positions within that discourse.

Stories of classed struggles appeared in discussions about education and ambition that indicated success as a rise from the bottom to the top. For instance, the white girls'

viewed school and education as successful, and at the same time, discussed it in relation to class struggle. One girl explained that: *"I think it's* [success] *like education, like my mom, she had to drop out of high school because of me and my sister, and she never got a good university or college...and she went back to school."* In this sense, mainstream discourses about success are negotiated based on circumstance and social location.

Similarly, in terms of ambition, another girl explained that success could mean: *"she could be a hobo...she could be a hobo and still be successful, like in the movie 'Happiness'* ['The Pursuit of Happyness'], *like he didn't have anywhere to live but he was successful."* The white girls' responses largely indicated that social success meant overcoming adversity and marginality. Rising to the top, thus, meant that people begin their road to success in a different place than where they can end up. For instance, the girls talked about celebrities who they viewed as now successful:

> *"Mariah Carey* [singer], *she used to just be a singer with her friends and all, now look at her, she almost has known hits songs than maybe Elvis, but she almost has as many albums"*
>
> *"Taylor Swift* [singer], *she used to be a professional horse back rider and when she started singing and playing the guitar. Goodbye horseback riding. Now she's on like the top five charts"*

For the white girls, success seemed to have no limits; anyone could rise from the bottom to the top.

While the white girls aspired to mainstream, middle class notions of success and negotiated their classed positions in that discourse, the black girls viewed success in a different way. The black girls experience the margins of mainstream success discourses and describe success as not being at risk and in terms of racialized occupations. For them, mainstream success is sometimes desired, sometimes challenged, and in some ways

unknown. Like the white girls, they viewed success as having a job, but talked about very different professions. For them an ideal job mainly involved being in the WBA, a singer or a fashion designer. One of the girls said that *"being a drug dealer is successful"*, while another responded, *"I want to be rich"*. These sorts of jobs speak to stereotypical notions of success in "black street culture". Mayeda, Chesney-Lind and Koo's (2001) work with ethnic youth found that being basketball stars or singers was viewed as the most viable option by young, ethnic youth. Similarly, Taylor, Smith and Taylor (2007) research points out that girls who have limited access to social opportunities sometimes engage in illegitimate means to success. For the black girls, attaining economic success means engaging in what I call *beat the street* kinds of work that, in social discourse, are carelessly associated with black culture. Thereby reinforcing an ideology where the only way for black youth to 'beat the street' is through sport, song or illegitimate means.

Similarly, the black girls discussions about education were largely absent in conversations about success. One of the girls did say that doing her homework was successul and offered no further discussion about it. For the most part the girls described success in terms of things not to engage in: *"not being a drug addict"*, *"not lighting fires"*, *"not stealing"*, *"not arguing."* These kinds of responses suggest that success for the black girls is essentially, to not be at-risk. In this sense, the girls appear to adopt mainstream discourses that outline what is not successful, but struggle with ideas of actual success for them in a broader social sense.

Interestingly, the black girls described what they viewed as both positive and successful: *"playing nice and being fair"* and *"loving each other."* Figure 44 portray a poster depiction of something both positive and successful. Basic skills that are taken for

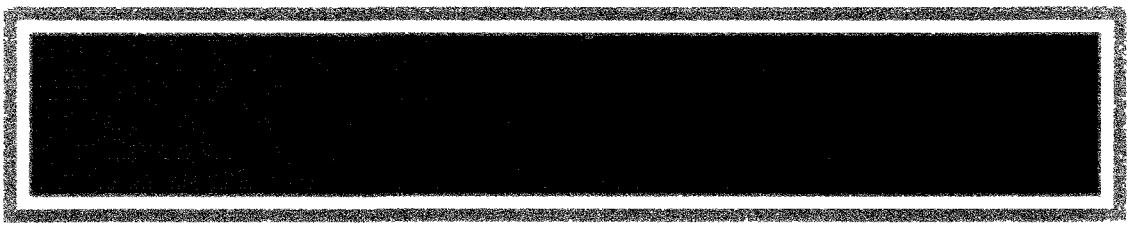


Figure 44. *"Read, Colour"*

granted, to read and colour, are defined as success for black girls. These girls view success as being able to read, colour, not be drug addicts and not steal, loving each other, playing nice and being fair.

The girls' discourse about success points to the white girls having a greater opportunity to negotiate mainstream notions of success compared to the black girls. Even though stories of class struggles appear in the white girls discourses, they view success as having no limits, whereas, the black girls' view success in terms of not being at risk, caring about people and equality. These differences in opportunity structures are further illustrated in the girls' negotiations of success and femininity.

The Culture of Girls Success: Discourses of Girl Power

Femininity became central in the girls' responses as they discussed success in terms family. Racial differences emerged about success that suggested the girls negotiate mainstream discourses about girl power and their everyday realities. For the black girls femininity is contradictory because their negotiations between dominant discourses and their realities are not coherent, whereas the white girls' responses deem dominant discourses of femininity and girl power as accessible.

The black girls believed that *"getting a man and having a child"* and *"going out with someone"* was successful. Subsequently, for these girls, *"being happy"* is success

and part of being happy is *"going out with someone."* Although the black girls viewed "getting a man and having a child" as successful they did not fully embrace this concept. After verbalizing their claim to success, some of the girls thoughtfully replied that, *"kids are friggin scary"* or *"I only like kids until they start walking and talking."* Responses about success and family were automatic and consistent with social discourses about "proper femininity", but there were also doubts.

White girls maintained: *"we don't need boys in our lives just to make us successful, we can do things ourselves."* One of the girls explained why having boys in your life can sometimes be unnecessary:

> *"you don't need a guy in your life to be successful, umm I was watching Maury this morning and there were these women on there right, who were being abused, told what to do, how to do it and when to do it and one of them was looking at the floor and shaking cause she was so scared and one of their husbands hit them so hard on one side of their head they lost hearing and ummm they don't need them in their lives, they can be like successful all on their own"*

These girls strongly believed girls are better off on their own in cases of abuse by boys or men. Boys, for the white girls were only thought of in practical terms: *"if you want to be successful for having kids you'll maybe want a boy in your life."* In terms of children, success also meant delaying motherhood: *"and she (mom) wants me and my sister to be successful and she doesn't want us to get pregnant by the age of 19 cause that's when she had my sister."* Nonetheless, the white girls also talked about single motherhood as successful:

> *"my mom, she raised two kids and she is still trying her hardest, but with being a single parent, taking care of us will be really hard for her... the woman she is today is a really good mom and really nice woman too, you can be successful all on your own like my mom"*

In this sense, success can be about being a single parent and a "good mom...all on your own".

Differences among the girls' cultural beliefs about family speak to their access to social discourses about femininity. The white girls' responses indicate success as self achievement, which is consistent with Harris's (2004) can-do girls who embrace self-ambition and delaying motherhood. At the same time, the girls challenge the limits of can-do discourse when they talk about success in single parenthood and when self ambition is more than doing things all on your own, it is not needing a man. While the can-do discourse explains, the white girls' ideologies about success, it also partly speaks to the struggles indicated in the black girls' responses. For the black girls, struggles emerge between this new economy of can-do (Harris 2004) and traditional ideologies found in the work of McRobbie (2000) where working class girls embrace childrearing and male relationships.

Girls Resilience: Negotiating Space & Femininity

Indications of resilience appeared in the girls responses when asked "what they or other girls do when things get tough", "how girls are successful in their communities", and surprisingly when asked "what the negative things they face are". Their resilience involves processes they engage in on a day-to-day basis to negotiate negative aspects of their communities and their cultural beliefs about femininity.

"Community" in Bad Neighbourhood Culture

The girls understanding of community involved a sense of neighbourhood-street culture and supportive networks, with more focus on the latter. For the girls, neighbourhood culture was described in terms of *bad things* happening in their community such as people getting shot, mugged, beaten up and violence against women. Although the girls indicated that the communities they live in are 'bad', they seem to distance themselves by focusing on the relationships and constructive resources that are grounded in supportive networks in their communities. Bottrell (2008) and Healy (2006) also found girls reshape the meaning of community when it is identified by outsiders as risked or bad. This is also identified in Harris's (2004) analysis.

While the girls in my research do not directly speak to the way outsiders view their communities, there did seem to be an implicit understanding among them that this was the case. They often began conversations with *"girls sometimes do things they're not supposed to"* or *"guys think that..."* which seemed as though the girls were speaking to as well as defending themselves against particular social discourses that define them in negative ways. In addition, many of the girls, talked about a strong police presence in their communities. Bottrell (2008) and Healy (2006) also found that girls experience a kind of monitoring that works to label them as risked. Thus, supportive networks seem to allow the girls to distance themselves from negative labels and monitoring of neighbourhood culture. In this way, girls' resilience is demonstrated in their ability to distance themselves from broader negative labels and regulators of bad neighbourhood culture by seeking out and navigating supportive networks.

Underlying girls navigation of supportive networks are negotiations between relationships/ resources and landscapes that are safe to utilize. The work of Cahill (2000)

lends an understanding to this kind of negotiation of space and people. She sought to explore young people's perception of street rules to understand their strategies for negotiating neighbourhood. Cahill (2000) found that a significant strategy employed by youth involved 'cognitive mapping', a concept adopted from the work of Merry (1986). Cahill (2000) defines cognitive mapping as: "the construction of categories that delineate places, times, and people that are safe or dangerous" (P. 266). For the girls in Cahill's (2000) research this meant largely mapping out risks in their neighbourhood such as "rape" and articulating rules for avoidance (P. 269). Cognitive mapping, in this sense, is used to identify risk or danger. The girls in my research use a kind of cognitive map to identify spaces that are safe coping strategies when things get tough within their supportive networks. In viewing the girls' views in the context of Cahill's work, I find it meaningful to use the term landscape in addition to space. While Cahill does not clearly define the term, she uses landscape to emphasize the cultural and socio-spatial elements of a built environment[8] where processes of socialization and human behaviour shape its meaning. Describing the girls' community as a landscape is a more useful concept in some instances than simply using the term space because it implies that there are sociological processes and discourses at work in particular spaces. Therefore, these cognitive maps represent community landscapes and people that are perceived as safe in negotiating the girls' social power.

Negotiating Adult Power & Femininity

[8] Laurence and Low (1990) argue that "built environment" means structures that humans have built for various purposes in the physical sense of the meaning. For example, a built environment can be cities, streets, hearths, shopping malls, villages and more.

Adult power was described by the girls in terms of being locked out and peer pressure. Underlying these negative experiences were issues of power that differed along lines of race. For the white girls, adult power was negotiated by attempts to conform to traditional social scripts of femininity. Adult relationships were important to the white girls and recall in the last chapter, they fear losing these relationships. Their stories of conformance to adult power were centred on their experiences at school and the notion of being ladylike. A conversation about being ladylike emerged from a photograph presented by one of the girls involving a quote from her classroom white board that read *"today I will be still like a mountain"* (see figure 46). In asking the girls what 'still like a mountain' meant,

Figure 46. *"Today I will be still like a mountain"*

they responded:

> *"well because a mountain is really still and they don't move beside ice burgs but are still and their really still because* [girl] *usually moves a lot, it just says she will be still like a mountain, she's not going to move, not going to get up out of her seat"*
>
> *"that's something we do every day for* [teacher], *we write down certain things that will make her feel so much better when she's in a cranky mood"*
>
> *"ok, so with my pencil I'll just be like this* [showing me sitting still] *and I won't be like this* [she gets up and moves around while she is writing], *I stay in one seat, in one spot, sit like a lady and do my work"*

This finding is consistent with research by Allan (2009) who found that teachers strongly support "being a lady" discourse that meant engaging in "proper femininity" described by one girl as: "...you have to sit like a lady with your legs crossed and your back straight and talk like this..." (P. 145). Similarly, the white girls in my research talked about needing to have a sense of self-control that meant being a lady and not moving around or being improper. In addition, being a lady also meant *"controlling your anger"* and *"you can be successful by controlling your attitude."* In terms of controlling your attitude and anger the girls suggested the best practice to conform when girls are upset is to *"tell my teacher"* or *"you gotta walk away."*

For the black girls, resilience involved attempts at resisting adult power. In school, they talked about attempts at resisting adult power in ways that also suggest attempts at resisting prescriptive gender norms and notions of 'being lady-like' described by the white girls. In asking the girls "how school was today" they said things such as: *"we were bad for our substitute teacher"* or *"we got in trouble because we didn't listen."* In a conversation with the girls, they spoke about not liking one of their teachers:

> "*Researcher: so, you like doing art?*
> *Response 1: no, not with my stinking art teacher*
> *Researcher: do you like doing this kind of stuff* [referring to the poster-boards]
> *Response 2: yeah on my own but it's not like in art class, because our teachers they get snippy and snippier"*

Their attempts at resisting adult power were unsuccessful because they get into trouble and although they did not discuss this further, it is clear that the structure of schools calls for conformance. Following this same line of thought, the girls talked about a staff member at the community centre making them apologize to another staff for being rude and when they apologized they crossed their fingers and said: *"not sorry"*. This indicates

that their attempt at resisting adult power remained hidden to avoid consequences in the community centre. The black girls did mention that in the past girls have been suspended from the community centre for resisting adult authority.

Getting It All Out: Safe Zones & Femininity

In the girls discourse about conformance to adult power, they talked about spaces to safely cope with frustration, anger and sometimes liking a boy without getting into trouble. Getting into trouble could result from things such as swearing, breaking objects, causing commotion and dating boys. Spaces, such as these, are constructed by the girls as safe zones where important processes of resilience take place through negotiations between their community landscape and discourses of femininity.

The girls' discussions about their coping mechanisms suggest that they compartmentalize ways of coping according to community landscapes that are safe to pursue their strong emotions. Recall in chapter four the girls' responses indicated when things get tough they sometimes coped by breaking objects another person gave them, hitting a pillow, cleaning, and writing in their diaries, which take place in their homes and specifically in their bedrooms. In addition, a couple girls discussed using a voodoo doll while at school, where on girl explained that: *"my voodoo doll is someone in my class that sits next to me, I take my doll to school and go like this* [punching motion]*."* Diaries in particular, were talked about by the girls as secretive spaces where they could articulate: *"what you want"*, *"like about people"*, *"when you hate people"*, *"who you like"*, and *"who you have a crush on."* In explaining the value in diaries needing to be secretive and hidden, one girl recalled having written about a guy she had a crush on and

was mortified when, *"my dad friggin found it"*, later revealing *"my dad wants me to go into boxing"* given her discovered interest in boys. The girls work hard to hide these strong emotions, sometimes it is not successful and has consequences-getting into trouble.

The girls coping strategies conform to proper femininity by carefully expressing themselves out of sight, yet getting out these strong emotions was important for the girls and indicates signs of resistance. This finding is consistent with the work of Gilligan and colleagues (1995) who suggest girls become silenced in adolescence because, in relationships with others, they struggle with what they are supposed to be like and what they actually feel. Struggling with relationships in this way is what Gilligan and colleagues (1995) call psychological resistance, which is the result of not expressing feelings that could disrupt, challenge, or jeopardize relationships with others, but in turn, create internal conflict that over time desists and becomes a complete disassociation in relationships with others. For the girls in this research, this 'internal conflict' was suggested in the ways they mapped their social landscape for safe places to get out these strong emotions. A significant difference did appear among the girls regarding social landscapes used for coping.

Photographs and drawings of playgrounds, swing sets and fields (see chapter four: figure 19 and chapter five: figure 38 as examples) representing external spaces, resonated more clearly with the white girls as community landscapes to cope:

> *"for me I usually go down to (an area) and I would just sit there and lay on the slide if it's a nice day, if it's a really nice day I go down to the playground by* [an area] *because there is a swing set there and I'll swing there and swear my head out"*
>
> *"they could go outside on a swing set or sit on a bench scream to yourself or talk to yourself"*

While the white girls discussed such safe zones, the black girls did not speak of using external spaces as ways to cope with their strong emotions suggesting that these spaces may be unsafe for them to express their strong emotions because of race. This difference among the girls can be accounted for in underlying gendered, classed and raced norms that work to harshly and institutionally punish ethnic girls who outwardly express themselves (Chesney-Lind & Irwin 2008, Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens 2008; Dohrn 2004; Reitsma-Street 1999).

Resisting Gendered Social Power

While adult power mainly called for conformance, resistance appeared in the girls' responses when they shared their views about interactions with other girls and boys. Interactions with other girls sometimes called for resisting gendered norms concerning 'proper femininity' in terms of being ladylike (Allan 2009), nice (Landry 2006) and hiding conflict (Gilligan & Colleagues 1995). Recall in chapter five the girls discussed unkindness as a risk in their communities where fighting becomes a strategy to cope. Thus, fighting for girls produces an identity that is perceived by them as powerful in ways that allow them to access autonomy and tough reputations. It is also important to note that fighting takes place out of adult site in school and on the street.

Interactions with boys were described in different ways by the girls and their responses were marked by conforming and resisting behaviours at one time. The girls resisted gendered social power by finding ways to use boy space to engage in girlhood. According to the girls' responses, they struggle to find space to hang out and do "girl

stuff", but often their resilience involves utilizing spaces traditionally recognized as male. It is important to note that while resistance is at work here, the girls are not completely successful in their resistance because despite great effort they meet the limits of patriarchy in the process. What can come from this analysis, however, is that resilience, like femininity, can involve resistance and conformity in the same instance.

For the black girls, the basketball court represented a space in their community where they could at times do "girl stuff" (see chapter five: figures 37 & 39): *"we play basketball there, hmmm sometimes we wait to go like skating in there, roller skating and biking cause it's big and well...it's smooth"* and *"it's smooth and not bumpy like that"* (see figure 48).

Figure 48. *'Bumpy pavement"*

While the girls liked hanging out at the basketball court, they also said:

> *"I barely even hangout there, I only go there certain times...when there's like nobody there or when there is certain people there like my friends, I play"*
>
> *"then the boys come and sometimes I just leave...I just leave cause I don't want to stay there"*

The basketball court and program within their community appeared to be designated for boys or at least ruled by boys. The girls, however, made this boy-like space their own by doing *girl stuff* such as roller skating, biking and cartwheels. In one moment a basketball court, traditionally male, turns into a girl space by lots of friends doing girl stuff. This is consistent with Pearce's (2004) work where girls utilized traditionally male spaces on the street to hang out with their girl friends and at the same time, recognize the danger of being on the street.

The boundary between boys space versus girls space is something the white girls recognize as an institutional disadvantage rather than in the street. For example, one of the girls talked about her experience writing a speech for cadets:

> *"well I did like a 20 minute speech about, we had to do something like historical about cadets, so I did when girls were first allowed in cadets, I did like a small speech and taught the green stars on what happened when girls were first indicted in, like a lot of girls"*

Hence, induction into cadets was a significant past time and allowed for her participation at present. However, further discussion about her experience in cadets led me to ask "if girls in cadets do push ups", she replied: *"actually what girls do is jumping jacks instead because they know most girls are probably weak...but I can do girl push ups."* Although faced with stereotypes about femininity, resistance appears in her experience of cadets by simply participating. Another discussed a similar ideology about sports, she explained:

> *"girls used to not be able to play sports but now we can. Ever since, I don't know what year it was, what month it was, what day it was, but ever since the day girls were able to play sports, were able to play basketball, hockey and soccer of course, and a lot of other sports, but I usually don't see a lot of girls' playing football"*

Similar to the cadet story, another girl explained that girls could play on the community centres football team, but she quit because: *"I was the only girl there, yeah."* In this sense, girls' resilience is the process of engaging in patriarchal institutions in spite of gendered norms that produce proper femininity.

While there are racial differences in the way the girls negotiate patriarchal space, they all engage in resistance by either using boy space to do girls stuff or by participating in space that has traditionally been deemed boy space. This is not to say the girls are completely successful in their resistance to boy space, as seen with the boys taking over the basketball court when they arrive or girls being deemed weaker in cadets, however, there are signs of resilience when recognizing how girls negotiate boy space to engage in girlhood.

Negotiating Body-Power: Claiming Body Space

Patriarchal space, for the girls, is more than just a physical location or activity, patriarchy claims girls' bodies as boy space by constituting their bodies through discourses of femininity. Boys' unkindness calls attention to cultural notions of femininity by using devaluing gestures about appearance to reiterate productions of power over girls' bodies. The girls' perceptions of boy unkindness involved boys' starting rumours, engaging in inappropriate jokes and misogynist language about girls bodies that created feelings of inferiority. Recall examples of this kind of misogyny involving bitch-fights, sling shot belts and the black girls sighting biological differences related to child bearing as the only means to what girls have and boys do not. In attempts to claim body space, not necessarily outside the dimensions of femininity, but in ways that resist the

notion of boy hegemony over girls' bodies, the girls talked about a number of ways they resisted patriarchy.

In calling attention to gendered norms about the "look" of successful girls, the girls said things such as:

> *"being skinny, always having to wear a uniform, glasses"*
>
> *"oh, I have a skirt, I have a tight skirt and I'm walking around in high heels with a purse"*

In recognizing these kinds of gendered norms as "being skinny" or wearing a "tight skirt" and "walking around in high heels", the girls largely believed that boys shaped the way girls should look and rejected this notion. For instance, some of the girls stated that:

> *"most guys think that girls that are successful usually wear short skirts and tight shirts and blouses...but some girls wear big shoes, sneakers, they wear jeans, they wear t-shirts, who really cares what they look like"*
>
> *"boys could think that to be successful you need to wear like a suit and nice sneakers and stuff or they won't bring you anywhere"*
>
> *"and they (boys) think we have to drink tea like this (action of tea drinking with pinkie in the air)and they say that girls can't play sports, but you know what? We can and we can do it wearing high heels"*

In addition, figures 49 and 50 show the girls' views about success that resist gendered norms about appearances. In figure 49, notice that successful is put in quotation marks signifying a kind of sarcasm or rejection of conventional ideas about success. The remaining words then suggest an annoyance toward success as involving poses. A similar reading can be made from figure 50 when successful is stated in quotation marks and illustrates the use of makeup. Her reflection that success is concerned with girls wearing makeup while she does not, speaks to her rejection of glamorous femininity. This finding is consistent with Harris's (2004) analysis that girls are finding creative ways and

utilizing opportunities to resist the new economy of girlhood that embraces glamorous femininity and consumerism, but ultimately speaks to middle class, white girls.

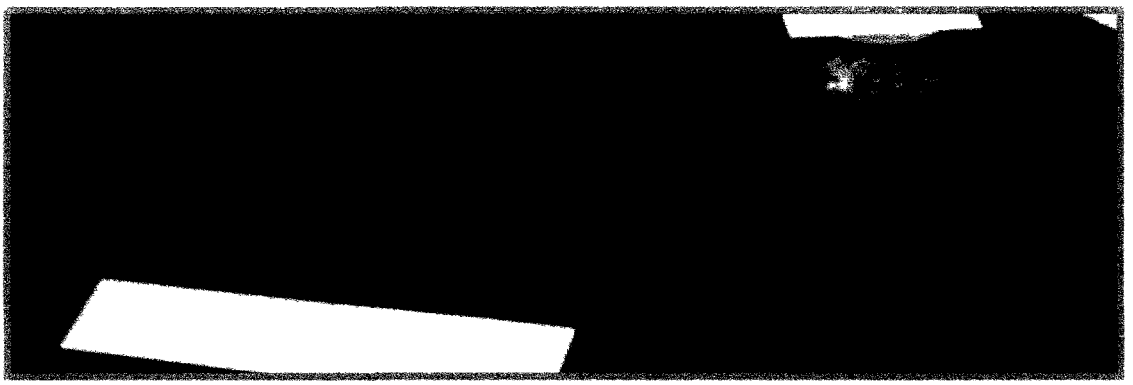


Figure 49. *"And girls are 'successful' by doing stupid, ugly poses"*

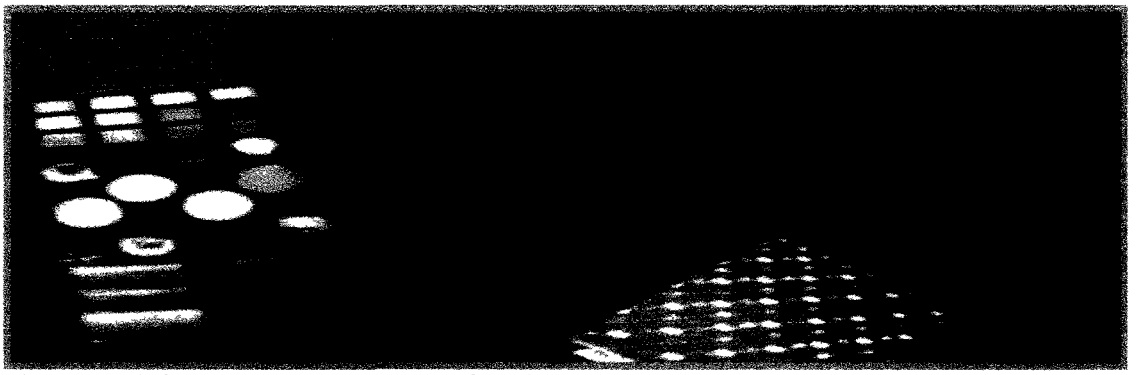


Figure 50. *"Girls are successful by wearing makeup (But not me)"*

Within these responses, there are stories of resistance such as wearing big shoes, t-shirts, referring to modeling/glamour as stupid, ugly poses and not wearing makeup. These findings are consistent with work by Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie (2005) who found that girls resisted notions of proper femininity to participate in skater culture. Although the girls in Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie's (2005) research are skater girls, their participation in street culture takes on similar kinds of at-risk discourses and patriarchal structures. Similar to the girls in my research, Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie's (2005) girls resisted aspects of appearance such as wearing tight clothes or makeup that in essence resist the notion of 'proper femininity' and by admission resist patriarchal power over

girls' bodies. Negotiating the limits of femininity and patriarchal structures significantly underscores the ways girls are resilient in their communities.

What Girls Want: "being messy" & "going places"

According to the girls, they seek accessible spaces to engage in girlhood without the limitations of gender, class and race. Accessible spaces carried different meanings for the girls along lines of race. For the black girls, it largely meant *going places*, and for the white girls it meant *being messy*. As such, their responses speak to the limits of girlhood they experience.

The black girls' responses indicated that they seek access to spaces beyond their neighbourhoods and said things such as:

"going to the movies"

"going to the fair"

"going on the Harbour Hopper"

"going on the log ride"

"going to exhibition park"

"going to Upper Clements"

"going to Atlantic Playland"

"going on a shopping spree at the mall"

Although the girls wanted to go places, they also discussed the financial feasibility of these kinds of activities. In talking about going on a shopping spree one of the girls mentioned *"but we'd bring our own cash."* The Harbour Hopper was seen as, *"that's way too expensive, everyone would have to bring like forty dollars."*

The black girls wanted programs that acknowledged their age, expressing a disinterest for "*kid stuff.*" Rather they asked for *"rough games"* such as football and *"not hide-n-seek"*. In recognizing age as an issue, the girls said they wanted to have *"a jacuzzi or a pool"* at the centre so they could swim, but were concerned about *"the teenagers smashing it up."* They also wanted to engage in activities they could specialize in such as: *"a girls basketball camp, where it's just that and you get to learn it...or just like a drawing camp, like just to have it for that and you get to learn more about that."* The girls wanted these programs to involve, as they put it, *girl stuff.* In learning what the girls wanted, their responses indicate classed and raced struggles they experience when they discussed going places and the expense of doing such.

In a different way, the white girls talked about accessing space that was absent of gendered norms. They discussed the meaning of *"girl power"* to articulate this theme. For them, girl power meant: *"being strong, independent and standing up for what you believe in"* and told me that an ideal program would recognize this idea of girl power. In practical terms they saw girl power programming as: *"talking about how girls can be successful, when their mad or sad and how to trust guys, but most guys you really don't want to talk to."* While the girls seemed adamant about using the term girl power beneath it all they wanted a space to be messy. Girl power was described by the girls in ways that meant they always felt like they needed to hold themselves together and when they described the program it was about being messy:

> R1: *"we didn't have enough time to fill in all the white spots (on the mural), so we just wanted to have a big mess"*
>
> R2: *"because girls like to be messy sometimes"*

R1: *"you see them dressing up when guys are around all the time, there can just be no reason, just be messy"*

R2: *"we can just lie around in like a pig sty and burp"*

R1: *"and like how guys are pigs"*

Having a messy space meant being away from boys. One girl described a heart on the mural: "*the hearts stand for girls are unique, have utility and don't need boys to control their lives.*" In this sense, the kind of space the white girls sought was where they could be autonomous and not worry about the social pressures of being a girl or having to deal with boys who control them.

Discussion

From this research and analysis, girls' resilience in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is a process of mapping the community landscape for safe ways to cope with struggles of power that involve negotiations between gendered norms and social reality. Within girls discourses of success, it is evident that mainstream success is sometimes desired, challenged and in some ways unknown. Economic and social achievements differed among the girls. The white girls viewed having a job was successful, but having a job that provides discounts was even better. The black girls negotiate economic success with discourses about "being singers" and "basketball stars" that are especially, raced in the literature. Social achievement on the other hand, indicated classed and raced negotiations in that the white girls employed a rising from the bottom to the top discourse and the black girls talked about fairness and loving each other. Femininity, for all the girls also involved mainstream discourses that suggested parallels with 'can-do' discourses and

contradictory notions of femininity, thus, indicating that processes of girls' resilience involve negotiating conventional and unconventional gender norms to be successful.

The girls' greater focus on supportive networks than neighbourhood culture showed signs of resilience in distancing themselves from violent neighbourhood culture. Importantly, the girls negotiated their community landscapes, relationships/ resources for support and gendered social power in ways that map safe people and spaces. In negotiating adult spaces, the girls told stories about conformance and resistance. While both the white and black girls' stories of adult power ended in conformance, their stories and maps started in different places. The white girls stories began with a narrative about conforming to 'proper femininity', while the black girls started from a place of resistance. These maps for negotiating resilience also become significant for the girls to cope with strong feelings. In wanting to get out their frustrations, feelings of anger and liking a boy, they designate spaces where these feelings are safe to express where they will not get into trouble.

Differently, in interactions with girls and boys, resistance comes to the forefront. Girls' unkind behaviour is negotiated sometimes through fighting in order to produce powerful identities. In finding ways to negotiate femininity on the street and worry less about pleasing adults, the girls struggle to find space to hang out and do 'girl stuff'. This often involves utilizing spaces traditionally recognized as male. Within their discourses about patriarchal space, the girls' responses suggested that patriarchy claims girls' bodies as boy space by constituting their bodies through discourses of femininity. This is evident in their experiences of unkindness by boys. In attempts to claim their body space, not necessarily outside the dimensions of femininity, but in ways that resist the notion of boy

hegemony over girls' bodies, the girls talked about resisting feminine appearances and notions of sexualized objects (i.e. "stupid, ugly poses"). These gendered, classed and raced struggles experienced by the girls were further reiterated in their discourse around programming. Mostly, the girls wanted accessibility to spaces to do girl stuff and resist the limits of proper gendered norms.

Part 3: Making Sense of the Discourses

Chapter Seven

Conclusion & Implications: Girls Resilience & Reflexive Sense Making

A persistent theme throughout this research is the extent to which girls from disadvantaged communities are already resilient. Girls' resilience stands as a flexible concept that becomes meaningful in considering the power struggles and social location of girls. The girls' perceptions and experiences played with the theoretical limits and boundaries of such concepts as: community, femininity, risk and resilience, consistently demonstrating conventional and unconventional meanings attached to each. Important differences and similarities emerged in comparison to the literature and among the girls across lines of race. From this research, then, important issues are raised concerning present assumptions about girls' resistance and resilience and why these assumptions are problematic.

Girls Are Already Resilient

Feminist subcultural research often frames girls' strategies to cope with risk as resistance and ignores the concept of resilience despite its usefulness in research with girls. While this literature provides value in defining deviant strategies that defy gendered norms as a way to manage risk, for girls, risk is often associated with victimization, and this perspective leads to tautological arguments about risk. I agree with Goodkind's (2005) argument that in framing girls as victims they are viewed as passive, punished for actions that are ok when boys do them and are problematically defined solely in light of their experiences of victimization. In an attempt to move away from victim centred

frameworks, this research was about understanding the discourses girls engaged in to define themselves as resilient, strong and successful. Consistent with the work of Bottrell (2008), when success is viewed in girls' terms, resistance and conformance to conventional notions of success are a means of resilience for marginalized girls. This finding is significant in supporting Ungar (2004) who theoretically positions resilience as discursive empowerment and de-emphasizes dichotomies between risk and resilience.

An important connection that stood out in this research, but is often neglected in the literature is the link between community and femininity as it is negotiated by the girls through power, space, and their understandings of success. Community and femininity negotiated together represented a source of power for the girls when power is a constant struggle in their lives. Hence, girls' resilience is about negotiating power in socially relevant ways that allow access to what is defined by girls as successful and to spaces that are warranted as safe. As such, girls are already resilient.

Community & Risk

The girls understanding of community involved a number of meanings. The literature often and problematically uses the concept, community, interchangeably with neighbourhood to establish disadvantaged neighbourhoods as a location of risk (Miller, 2008; Schaffner, 2007; Batchelor, 2005; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Chesney-Lind & Brown, 1999; Laidler & Hunt, 2001). From my findings, it would seem that neighbourhood is under an umbrella of community but community is not a fixed entity as is implied in the literature. The code of the street is a good example of how community is viewed as fixed. In this view, disadvantaged communities are believed to involve a group

of people who seek out power despite oppressions exerted by dominant society and the neighbourhood is often associated with a violent culture that unites residents. My findings suggest that community is multilayered and has far more meaning than simply a pocketed location of high crime and delinquency. The girls understanding of community flowed in and out of a range of meanings involving bonds to others, location, representation of culture and resources.

Similar to Bottrell's (2008) study, these girls focused on community as a supportive network that involved a focus on relationships and resources, location and sometimes representations of culture. The girls support network involved relationships and resources that allowed them to distance themselves from violent neighbourhood culture, and generated a sense of community. While Bottrell's (2008) girls identified outsiders as risk and their neighbourhood-community as a support network that safe guarded them from these outsiders, the girls in this research appeared to identify risk as feelings of powerlessness within their support networks.

These feelings of powerlessness came from struggles of power that involved hierarchal relationships with adults, power struggles among the girls and with boys. Within these discourses, powerlessness was experienced when adults limited the girls' accessibility to space and when adults exerted authority that, in turn, generated fear of losing caring adult relationships. In girl to girl power struggles, unkindness challenged their sense of power where power was viewed in terms of autonomy or tough reputations. In gendered interactions, feelings of powerlessness came from patriarchal power exerted through body sanctions by boys, misogynist attitudes and language, and boys' hegemonic claims to space. From these findings, support networks are girls' source of community

and risks are that which threatens their power to access and power within these support networks.

Girls Resilience: Negotiating Power

The girls manage these power struggles by negotiating gendered norms and community landscape for ways to safely cope with risk. These negotiations involve discourses of being "ladylike", hiding strong emotions and subordination to boys; and discourses of femininity that are consumer driven, encourage individualism and glamour, but also stay within the limits of patriarchy. The girls conform, resist and sometimes engage in both discourses depending on the power struggles they are encountering. This is consistent with the resistance literature that suggests marginalized girls who are classed and raced engage in "adaptable femininities" (Ness 2004; Laidler & Hunt 2001; Miller & White 2004; Miller 1998).

Girls engage in femininities that are permitted in the social landscapes that constitute their supportive networks. The process of managing power struggles involves seeking out safe zones to engage in behaviours that may be devalued by and/or tolerated by others. Hence, the girls conform to adult power by being "ladylike" and hiding their strong emotions, while in interactions with other girls, they challenged proper femininity by fighting. In interactions with boys, the girls challenged patriarchy by engaging with spaces traditionally associated with boy culture and rejecting the notion of glamour, beauty and sexualized objects. These attempts at challenging patriarchy were not outside the limits of femininity, rather they fuzzied these limits and were not completely successful because the girls recognized the boundaries of male hegemony. These findings

support Cahill's (2000) notion of cognitive mapping where individuals navigate spaces, people and times that are safe or dangerous. Hence, knowing what is acceptable, when and with who allows the girls to be resilient so they may conform and/or resist gendered, classed and raced norms safely.

Although the girls did share some similar ways of coping with powerlessness, there were important differences that stood out along lines of race and suggested that power and powerlessness is not necessarily experienced the same way by all marginalized girls. These differences shaped their relationships and accessibility to social landscapes within their supportive networks and understandings of success. In this way, friendships appeared more accessible to the black girls and adult relationships more desirable among the white girls. External spaces were absent from the black girls discussions about coping, whereas, these were a central strategy of coping for white girls. This difference is possibly attributable to the greater risk that public spaces present to ethnic girls. The girls' perception of success were also classed and raced. While all the girls engaged with discourses about mainstream middle class success, class struggle appeared in the white girls' narratives and ways of avoiding risk appeared for the black girls who were challenged in defining success. These differences shaped the way the girls negotiated social discourses in relation to themselves to be resilient in the context of their lives.

Discussion & Conclusion

Girls' resilience is not something that can be defined from this research; rather, resilience is contextual and situational. I would argue that while there are always going to be similar experiences among girls, there will also always be differences and because of

that, it is not possible to formulate a definition that will not be arbitrary. Hence, for the girls in this research, resilience is simply the way in which they negotiate between gendered, classed and raced norms and the community landscape for ways to safely cope with struggles of power. While I have offered a way to understand resilience based on the girls views in this research, resilience is a changing concept based on individual experience as seen through the differences among the girls throughout this thesis. As a result, this research offers a critique of both the delinquency prevention and, to some extent, the gender-responsive literature which has largely focused on predetermined definitions of risk and resilience.

Although this research addresses the views of a small number of girls and is exploratory, important contributions can be taken away from this project. Theoretically, the research provides an analysis of girls' resilience that goes beyond identifying resistance as the only means marginalized girls utilize for coping with systemic disadvantages. While I initially intended on examining resistance as a process of resilience, because my starting place was girls' violence and delinquency, the results indicate that conventional behaviour is just as relevant for marginalized girls. In many ways the girls conformed to gendered, classed and raced norms in their day to day lives.

This research also brings to light the importance of exploring the context and meaning of community in girls lives, or at the very least avoiding negative assumptions about community, in research with girls. Community deserves far more investigation and should not be interchangeably used with neighbourhood, because as this research shows, community appeared to be an umbrella for location, bonds with others, representations of culture and resources.

Methodologically and epistemologically, my research was designed to explore the various discourses of resilience, risk, community, gender and success. As a result, I came to learn that these concepts are flexible and sometimes flexible together, but are often defined in research in fixed ways that work to problematize certain behaviours and favour others. While I was somewhat prepared for this because of my theoretical positioning in Ungar's (2004) constructionist work, during the analysis it became evident that the girls resistance literature rarely speaks to flexible concepts aside from femininity. Resilience is treated as an add-on or an implicit conceptual underpinning rather than an important theoretical process underlying resistance. In this sense, my research contributes to the constructionist lens of resilience consistent with the work of Ungar (2004). Additionally, this research offers further insight into the girls' subcultural literature consistent with the work of Bottrell (2008).

An important methodological contribution of my research comes from the epistemological position that talk alone is not sufficient in exploring girls' understandings of the world. From engaging in creative methodologies with the girls, important discourses emerged that the girls sometimes struggled to discuss. Often the photographs resulted in discussions where initial incoherent thoughts worked out as the girls explained and analyzed them. While creative methods helped in some ways, talking was also necessary to clarify meaning. In this sense, my research contributes to the growing field of visual methodologies and highlights the value of exploring girls' views creatively. In addition to creative methodologies, this research points to some of the issues involved in assuming a least-adult role as a means of developing and maintaining rapport with children and youth as research participants that are more complex than implied by

Mandell's (1988) definition. In particular, I have come to learn that assuming a least-adult role is a challenge when faced with ethics considerations, rules of organizations acting as a recruiting source, and when no pre-rapport building takes place. A part from the research process, it is also apparent that the least-adult role is also an important part of the analysis stage of research.

This research also makes a practical contribution from the girls' views on valuable programming through discussing the specific things they need. The girls were critical of the programming they were already involved in and talked about engaging in practices that would build their strengths. Overall, the girls wanted a space to engage in activities where they would not have the weight of norms or judgement and where they felt free and safe to be 'just' girls.

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Appendix A: Recruiting and Information Pamphlet

What Is Girls' Resiliency All About?

Resiliency means many different things, but it most often means the ability to be strong and overcome challenges even though a person may face all sorts of negative events and issues.

Resiliency is different for everyone and every person is resilient in her own way. Girls may face many different challenges than boys and girls may be resilient in different ways than boys. But, because not a lot is known about girls' resiliency, we can't yet make a difference in girls' lives.

Girls Have A View, We Just Need To Pay Attention

Researcher: Val Billard
Saint Mary's University
Phone: (902) 443-2743
Email: vbillard@ns sympatico ca

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Bell
Saint Mary's University
Phone: (902) 420-5889
Email: sandra bell@smu ca

Ethics Chair: Dr. Veronica Stinson
Saint Mary's University
Research Ethics Board Chair
Phone: (902) 420-5728
Email: ethics@smu.ca

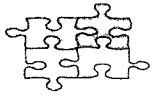
Girls' Resiliency Project

Discovering the Strength of Marginalized Girls

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN GIRLS' LIVES?

There are some girls who face a lot of tough situations in their lives, like families not having enough money to meet their needs, girls not having enough things to do in their communities and being bored or feeling left out, some girls may get into trouble with the law, and there are some girls who do not have any people who are older than them to look out for them.

These kinds of situations are some of the tough things that some girls go through. It is important to understand how girls are resilient so that better supports will be available for girls who need them. We need to learn about girls' resiliency to make programs available.



HOW CAN YOU HELP OTHERS LEARN ABOUT GIRLS' RESILIENCY?

I am a student at Saint Mary's University and I am doing a research project on girls' resiliency. I am looking for girls between the ages of 11 to 18 years from housing communities to participate in my research project.

The project will involve four group discussions with girls over a span of one to two months depending on the girls' schedules. These group discussions will be about one to two hours long depending on the girls' responses. The group discussions will be held at the community centre.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

To do the research project, I have made up guidelines in the form of questions to give to the girls. I will give the girls these guidelines along with a disposable camera and an art portfolio containing art supplies, and I will ask the girls to photograph a number of different things that mean something to them. They will also be asked to use their art portfolios as another way to express themselves.

The girls' art work and photography will be what guides the group discussions. Each of the four group discussions will involve a different topic. Before each group discussion, I will ask the girls to leave the camera at the community centre, so I can develop the pictures and bring them to the group discussion. At the beginning of each group discussion the girls will have some time to put their pictures in an order or make a collage if they chose; whatever way they want to talk about them. The focus group discussions will be audio taped and video-taped, so that I can review our discussions for my final report.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF PARTICIPATING?

While there are a lot of benefits, I also want to inform you of possible risks. Even though the risks are minimal, I think it is important for you to know. Because the girls will be sharing their experiences and views, there is always a possibility some may become upset.

If that happens, I am making sure that there is someone at the centre for girls to talk to while the project is going on and after it is over. I also will make sure the girls know they are free to leave the project at any time, and if that should happen, anything they have shared with me will not be used for the research.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATING IN MY RESEARCH?

There are benefits for the girls who participate in this research project. First, girls will have an opportunity to share their views and experiences of resiliency with me, which is a way for their voices to be heard.

Second, the girls' perspectives will be appreciated and valued by myself and others who want to understand resiliency. In sharing their views and experiences, the girls will be contributing to awareness about girl resiliency and this may help future programming designed to meet the needs of girls.

Third, I hope the girls will enjoy this experience. I have attempted to make it a fun and creative project by making it about photography and the art portfolio.

Finally, as a way to show my appreciation each girl will receive a gift certificate at the end of the research study for their participation,

If You're Interested-What To Do?

If you are interested in participating in my project, you can fill out the contact sheet attached to the parental consent form. Because, the girls will be between the ages of 11 to 18, I will need your parents consent.

The parental consent/ contact sheet can be dropped off at the community centre in a brown envelope that I will bring to the community centre before your activity begins at the centre. I will pick up these contact sheets, and will get in touch with you.

It is important that you get your parent or guardian to sign the consent form and contact sheet so you may participate in my research.

Parental Consent
For The Girls Resiliency Project

Your signature on this form indicates that you do consent to your daughter participating in my research. If you have any questions, please contact me: Valerie Billard, 443-2743 or my, academic advisor: Dr. Sandra Bell, 420-5889, or Dr. Veronica Stinson, Chair, Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca.

I have read the description of the research and am satisfied with all the information I have been given by the researcher. I hereby consent to my daughter's participation in the study that Valerie Billard wishes to conduct. I am aware that my daughter's involvement is based primarily on my permission and that at any time I can withdraw my daughter from this study. I also understand that my daughter is free to withdraw at any time if she chooses to do so.

Parent/Guardian Signature:

_____

Date: _____

If your daughter wishes to participate in my research study, please ask her to fill out the following information:

Name:

_____

Contact Number:

_____

Parental Consent
For The Girls Resiliency Project

Your signature on this form indicates that you do consent to your daughter participating in my research. If you have any questions, please contact me: Valerie Billard, 443-2743 or my, academic advisor: Dr. Sandra Bell, 420-5889, or Dr. Veronica Stinson, Chair, Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca.

I have read the description of the research and am satisfied with all the information I have been given by the researcher. I hereby consent to my daughter's participation in the study that Valerie Billard wishes to conduct. I am aware that my daughter's involvement is based primarily on my permission and that at any time I can withdraw my daughter from this study. I also understand that my daughter is free to withdraw at any time if she chooses to do so.

Parent/Guardian Signature:

_____

Date: _____

If your daughter wishes to participate in my research study, please ask her to fill out the following information:

Name:

_____

Contact Number:

_____

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Project: Girls' Resilience: Discovering the Strengths Of Marginalized Girls

Researcher:
Valerie Billard, Department of Sociology and Criminology
Saint Mary's University, Halifax
Telephone: 443-2743
Email: vbillard@ns.sympatico.ca

Academic Supervisor:
Sandra Bell, Ph. D, Department of Sociology and Criminology
St. Mary's University, Halifax
Telephone: 420-5889 (office)
Email: sandra.bell@smu.ca

I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Saint Mary's University. As part of my graduate thesis requirement, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Bell. I am inviting you to participate in this study. The purpose of the study is to examine young women's resiliency to offending and violence.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Veronica Stinson, Chair, Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca.

What is this study about?
This study will help us understand girl resiliency by learning from the views and experiences of girls. Allowing young women to express their view is a powerful way to gain knowledge about the circumstances and reasons for girls' resiliency. Your views are important to expand this understanding. I will interview girls in groups to learn about their experiences and views about resiliency.

Why am I asking you to participate?
I want to interview girls between the ages 11 to 18 about their views and experiences of resiliency. Sharing your views can help us improve future programs and policies for girls.

What will you be doing in this research project as a participant?
I will ask you to be a part of four focus group discussions with girls from your community centre. You will get disposable cameras and an art portfolio to help you answer the questions I will ask. The pictures you take and the art you create will be shared in the group discussions with me and other girls.

How long will it take?
We will meet four times for about one to two hours each at the community centre.
What if you decide you don't want to participate in the group discussions anymore?
Tell me. You don't have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can decide to leave the group discussions at any time. Nothing bad will happen if you don't want to be a part of group discussions anymore. If you do leave the group discussions, I will not use the information you have shared with me for my final report.

Are there any risks for you in participating in the group discussions?
Possibly. If you had some bad experiences in your community, you may feel upset by some of the things discussed in the groups. On the other hand, it may feel good to share your views. If you feel upset at any time, there will be a support person at the community centre that you can talk to during or after our group discussions. Also, I will be giving you some help-line phone numbers and information on how to get support from your community centre before and after our group discussions.

Why might you want to participate in the group discussions?
You will have an opportunity to share your views and experiences on resiliency with me and other girls in the groups.

Your views will be appreciated and valued by myself and others who want to understand resiliency and may help future programming for girls.

I hope you will enjoy this experience. I have attempted to make it a fun and creative project by making it about photography and art portfolios.

As a way to show my appreciation, you will receive a gift certificate at the end of the project.

Who is involved in your research project?
I will be the only researcher conducting this study and my work will be supervised by my thesis supervisor Dr. Sandra Bell but she will not be participating in our group discussions.

Will what you tell me be kept secret?
Anything you tell me during this study will be kept strictly **confidential.** Your name will not be used to ensure anonymity so that no one will ever be able to identify what you said in the group discussions. I will be locking all information that you tell me in a secure location where no one else can see it. This consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored in a different place so no one can ever know what girls participated in the research.

In order for all the girls, including yourself, to be part of this study, you will be required to maintain confidentiality. This means you will be asked and expected to not reveal any of the girls' true identities or discussions from our group discussions.

How will I remember what you tell me in the group discussions?
Each group discussion will be taped and video recorded so that I can remember what you tell me. These tape and video recordings will only be for me to review so I can write my final report. The only other person who will have access to this information will be my thesis supervisor, Dr. Sandra Bell.

What will happen with the information you give me?
I will be summarizing your views and the other girls' views to put into a final report about girls resiliency. ***No individual girls will be identifiable in my thesis report.*** If you wish to see the thesis when it is finished, it will be available at the neighbourhood community centre.

Your signature on this form means that you do consent to participate in my research. If you have any questions, please contact me: Valerie Billard, vbillard@ns.sympatico.ca, 443-2743 or my academic advisor: Dr. Sandra Bell, 420-5889.

I have read the description of the research and am satisfied with all the information I have been given by the researcher. I have discussed with Valerie any concerns that I may have and am satisfied. I hereby consent to participate in the study that Valerie Billard wishes to conduct. I am aware that I can withdraw from this study at any time if I choose to do so.

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C: Focus group discussion guidelines

Group Discussion #1:

What to do with your disposable camera and art portfolio?

I have a few questions for you to think about, these are:

D) Can you help me understand what daily life is like for you in your community?

E) Can you show me and explain to me some of the negative situations girls face within your community?

F) Can you show me and explain to me some of positive things for girls in your community?

To answer these questions, I have given you a disposable camera and an art portfolio where you can show me what these things mean for you.

For each picture you take, I would like you to make a note about what that picture means for you and maybe a little description of what the picture is.

The art portfolio is for you to draw or write about these pictures or your experiences. The art portfolio can also be where you make a note about what your picture is and means to you.

Before our next meeting, I ask that you drop off your disposable camera to the centre for me to pick up and get developed.

When we meet for our group discussion, I will bring the pictures so we can talk about them together. I would also like you to bring your art portfolio to the meeting.

If you have any questions you want to ask me before our next meeting you can call me. Here's my number: 443-2743.

Group Discussion #2:

Like last time we met, I have a few questions for you to think about for our next meeting:

C) Can you help me understand how girls who grow up in your neighbourhood are successful?

D) Can you show me and explain to me the things you do and you think other girls do when things get tough?

Everyone has received another disposable camera and all of you have the portfolio, so I ask that you do the same with the cameras and portfolios as for our last meeting.

Remember to make notes of each picture you take either in your portfolio or on a piece of paper.

Before our next meeting, please drop off your disposable camera to the centre for me to pick up and get developed.

When we meet for our group discussion, I will bring the pictures so we can talk about them together. I would also like you to bring your art portfolio.

If you have any questions you want to ask me before our next meeting you can call me. Here's my number: 443-2743.

Group Discussion #3:

For our next meeting, I have a few more questions for you to consider:

D) Can you help me understand what girls and guys do for fun in your community?

E) What places do girls and guys hang out?

F) What things are girls interested in and what things do you think boys are interested in?

Remember to make notes of each picture you take either in your portfolio or on a piece of paper.

Before our next meeting, please drop off your disposable camera to the centre for me to pick up and get developed.

When we meet for our group discussion, I will bring the pictures so we can talk about them together. I would also like you to bring your art portfolio.

If you have any questions you want to ask me before our next meeting you can call me. Here's my number: 443-2743.

Group Discussion #4:

For our last meeting together, I have something different planned, that I hope you will enjoy. I have one more question I want you all to think about:

A) Imagine a program or thing to do just for girls that you would like to participate in. What would that be and look like for you?

For this question, you can use your portfolios to keep notes about your thoughts and ideas or you might want to draw what it would look like. I am only asking that you think about it and we will discuss your ideas at our last group discussion and we will also do something fun.

If you have any questions you want to ask me before this meeting you can call me. Here's my number: 443-2743.

Appendix D: Letter to Community Centre

Community Centre
Address

To Whom It May Concern

Subject: Girls' Resiliency Project

I am recruiting girls from this neighborhood as focus group participants for research that I am conducting on girls' resiliency for my Master's degree at Saint Mary's University. I was hoping that the centre could aid me in my research by recruiting girls from the neighbourhood as potential participants. This can be accomplished simply by informing girls and parents who attend programs and events at the centre about my research.

I will provide pamphlets for the Centre to give out to the parents and girls to inform them about my research project (see attached). I will provide the Centre with a number of copies of the pamphlet for distribution once the project begins. I am also asking for the Centre to collect the contact information for potential participants. I will provide contact forms and envelopes for participants and ask them to leave this material with someone at the Centre. I will periodically check in to collect contact information so that I can set up the focus groups and answer any further questions that girls or their parents may have.

In addition, I was also hoping that the community centre would be able to offer facilities, such as a room, where I can conduct focus groups for this research project. Finally, in case any of the girls become upset at any time during the focus group discussions or afterwards, I am requesting that the Centre ensure a support person will be available for the girls to talk with.

I have attached a brief outline of my research (see the pamphlet). The outline describes my research, the potential benefits for the girls and the details of how I will go about doing the research. If you are interested in supporting my project, I ask that you provide me with a signed letter, on organization letterhead, agreeing to participate.
If you or any member of the community have any further questions about my research, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your support in my thesis research.

Thank you,
Valerie Billard
Contact Information:
Email: vbillard@ns.sympatico.ca
Phone: 443-2743

Appendix E: Feedback Letter

Saint Mary's University
Department of Sociology and Criminology

Master's Thesis Research Study of Valerie Billard
Email: vbillard@ns.sympatico.ca
Telephone: 443-2743

Dear (name),

In April 2009 you volunteered to participate in my research study on girls' resiliency where we engaged in group discussions. I want to express my utmost gratitude and appreciation for your participation. My research study will be available for viewing in the neighborhood Community Centre sometime in the fall. You may contact the centre in the fall to view my final report. I also want to reiterate that all of your responses will remain anonymous in my final report and that all the information you have shared with me is strictly confidential. Only myself and my thesis supervisor will have access to this information.

As outlined in the informed consent forms for both you and your parent or guardian, I would like to remind you that if you need to talk to someone about any negative memories that may have come up through the interviews, you can access the support person at the community centre. I also would like to give you several teen help-line numbers that you can also access for support at any time.

Kids Help-Line: 1-800-668-6868
Metro Halifax Help-Line: 421-1188
Nova Scotia Youth Help-Line: 1-800-420-8336
Halifax Teen Help-Line: 902-567-0330

I hope that this experience was as fun for you as it was for me and I wish you the best in the future.

Thank you,
Valerie Billard

Appendix F: Initial Meeting brief Outline

What is resilience?

Resiliency means many different things, but it most often means the ability to be strong and overcome challenges even though a person may face all sorts of negative events and issues.

Resiliency is different for everyone and every person is resilient in her own way. Girls may face many different challenges than boys and girls may be resilient in different ways than boys. But, because not a lot is known about girls' resiliency, we can't yet make a difference in girls' lives.

Why is it important to understand girls' resilience?

There are some girls who face a lot of tough situations in their lives, like families not having enough money to meet their needs, girls not having enough things to do in their communities and being bored or feeling left out, some girls may get into trouble with the law, and there are some girls who do not have any people who are older than them to look out for them.

These kinds of situations are some of the tough things that some girls go through. It is important to understand how girls are resilient so that better supports will be available for girls who need them. We need to learn about girls' resiliency to make programs available.

What will I be asked to do?

There will be four group discussions between one to two hours long over the next few weeks. I will give each of you a set of questions to consider for each of the four group discussions. I will also give you each an art portfolio today to keep over the next few weeks and a disposable camera before three of the group discussions. I am asking you to take pictures and use your art portfolio to answer the questions.

I will be giving each of you your first set of questions, your art portfolio, and your first camera today. Before our next meeting I ask that you drop off your cameras to the centre on the dates we agree to, so I can get the pictures developed. I will bring your pictures to each of our focus groups. At the beginning of each focus group I will give you each about 15 to 20 minutes to make a collage or put the pictures in your art portfolio. Then, we will have a chat about your pictures and art portfolio for an hour or two.

The art portfolio can be a place to write poetry, songs, diaries, reflections, draw, paint, and do crafts; whatever you want to do to answer the questions I have given each of you. I will show an example of my art portfolio that I have brought today.

What are the risks and benefits of participating in my research?
While there are a lot of benefits, I also want to inform you of possible risks. Even though the risks are minimal, I think it is important for you to know. Because I am asking you to share your experiences and views with me and the other girls, there is always a possibility some may become upset.

If that happens, I am making sure that there is someone at the centre for you to talk to while the project is going on and after it is over. I also want to stress to you that you are free to leave the project at any time, and if that should happen, anything you have shared with me will not be used for the research.

There are some benefits from your participation in this research project. First, you will have an opportunity to share your views and experiences of resiliency with me, which is a way for you to be heard.

Second, your perspectives will be appreciated and valued by myself and others who want to understand resiliency. In sharing your views and experiences, you will be contributing to awareness about girl resiliency and this may help future programming designed to meet the needs of girls.

Third, I hope you will enjoy this experience. I have attempted to make it a fun and creative project by making it about photography and the art portfolio.

Finally, as a way to show my appreciation each of you will receive a gift certificate at the end of the research study for your participation.

What is anonymity and confidentiality?(Consent Form)

Anonymity means that your name and who you are is protected from others knowing who you are.

Confidentiality means that the information you share with me cannot be accessed by anyone else except for me and my thesis supervisor.

In our focus groups all of you will know who each other are so we cannot be anonymous to each other, and we will also know who has talked about certain things so what you share in front of each other is not confidential between us.

But, if we don't share with any one else who is in our group discussions and what they say, meaning telling others what one of the girls in the group say, our group discussions will be anonymous and confidential to other people.

(Look over consent form closely) and is everyone comfortable signing the form?

Photograph Boundaries

In taking the pictures it is very important that we protect the identity of other people as well as within our group.

So, when the pictures are taken what do you think can be done to protect others identity?
-taking pictures of people from the back
-taking pictures from a distance
-taking pictures of activities and not faces
(maybe show some examples)

Also, in within our discussions, if you recognize someone or a certain thing in the pictures, we will not be talking about who that person is- we are going to talk about the picture not the person in it.

Also, we need to consider your safety too. So, what are things that we shouldn't photograph?

- no illegal activities

What date and time works best for you?

We will have to work out when is the best time for all of us to meet next time for our first group discussion, and when will be a good time for you to drop off your cameras to the centre.

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Department Office
T 902.420.5534
F 902.420.5561

Research Ethics Board Certificate Notice

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has issued an REB certificate related to this thesis. The certificate number is: 09-034 .

A copy of the certificate is on file at:

Saint Mary's University, Archives
Patrick Power Library
Halifax, NS
B3H 3C3

Email: archives@smu.ca
Phone: 902-420-5508
Fax: 902-420-5561

For more information on the issuing of REB certificates, you can contact the Research Ethics Board at 902-420-5728/ ethics@smu.ca .