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MAKES ME MAD!
THE FED UP HONEYS INVESTIGATE STEREOTYPES, GENTRIFICATION,
AND THE DISINVESTMENT OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE

by

Caitlin Cahill

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

MAKES ME MAD! THE FED UP HONEYS INVESTIGATE STEREOTYPES, GENTRIFICATION, AND THE DISINVESTMENT OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE

by

Caitlin Cahill

Advisor: Professor Cindi Katz

Disrupting stereotypical profiles that fix young women of color in a particular location (“at risk” in the ‘inner city’), six young women (the Fed Up Honeys) engage the “culture wars,” through “a collective struggle for interpretative power” (Pratt, 1999) in a participatory action research project entitled “Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of young urban womyn of color” (www.fed-up-honeys.org). My dissertation focuses on the methodological and theoretical contributions of this project and follows its lead, tracing the connections between representations of young working class women of color and the disinvestment and gentrification of the Lower East Side neighborhood of New York City. In my analysis I consider the critical role of representations in legitimating contradictions of urban economic restructuring and neoliberal spatial politics. In turn, I consider how young women negotiate, accommodate, and challenge deficit stereotypes while constructing their subjectivities through a participatory action research project.

My analysis addresses some of the radical possibilities of participatory and collaborative research. Not only did the young women involved transform themselves, but they also

pushed scholarship in new directions, questioning old assumptions, and engaging the contradictions of their everyday lives. Through the process of comparing each others' personal experiences the young women collectively developed 'new' subject positions and a narrative framework that contests the discourses of risk, which construct young working class women of color as a "burden to society" and questions the valuation of the economic over their personal well-being. To this end, the Fed Up Honeys challenge sociospatial policies and practices that produce inequality in their neighborhood and the broader context of their everyday lives, effectively reframing the public conversation about gentrification and urban economic restructuring.

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There is always a moment in any kind of struggle when one feels in full bloom. Vivid. Alive. One might be blown to bits in such a moment and still be at peace. ..To be such a person or to witness anyone at this moment of transcendent presence is to know that what is human is linked, by a daring compassion, to what is divine. During my years of being close to people engaged in changing the world I have seen fear turn into courage. Sorrow into joy. Funerals into celebrations. Because whatever the consequences, people, standing side by side, have expressed who they really are, and that ultimately they believe in the love of the world and each other ...

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Preface

While of course any project of this scope is a collaboration, the emphasis in this project was upon collaboration which has different implications. Although this dissertation is written by me it is based upon a collective project developed with six young women (the Fed Up Honeys) in the summer of 2002. What follows represents my perspective on our process and the findings of the participatory action research project: "Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of Young Urban Womyn of Color."

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1.	
Introduction.....	1
<i>Structure of the dissertation.....</i>	<i>10</i>
CHAPTER 2.	
The struggle for interpretative power: The theory and methods of a participatory action research process.....	14
<i>“Digging where I stand”.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Participants (co-researchers) & setting.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>An open structure.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>A collaborative process.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>A collective praxis methodological approach.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Facilitating collective research.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Building a community of researchers.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Our process: critical investigation of personal everyday lives.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Problem identification.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>A collaborative autoethnography.....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Data analysis.....</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Speaking back.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Degrees of participation.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Redefining the role of the academic researcher.....</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>A more involved process.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>What is the value of PAR as a research methodology?.....</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>Including excluded perspectives.....</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>A relational analysis.....</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Interpretative power.....</i>	<i>92</i>
CHAPTER 3.	
New “ghetto” productions and the social construction of young working class women of color.....	94
<i>The neighborhood.....</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>Discursive “work”.....</i>	<i>99</i>
<i>Representations of “the other” half.....</i>	<i>102</i>
<i>Untangling pathological representations and ghetto productions.....</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>The underclass.....</i>	<i>111</i>
<i>The neoliberal context and gentrification.....</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Gentrification.....</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>The exclusion of young working class women of color.....</i>	<i>126</i>
CHAPTER 4.	
Negotiating grit and glamour.....	137
<i>Growing up in a changing neighborhood.....</i>	<i>138</i>
<i>Disinvestment.....</i>	<i>139</i>

<i>"The system"</i>	147
<i>Displacements</i>	156
<i>Cultural displacement</i>	162
<i>Ambivalence</i>	165
 CHAPTER 5.	
Learning on the Lower East Side	182
 <i>Criss-crossing the body: Fluid identifications</i>	183
<i>Working working working</i>	187
<i>The context: Disinvested public educational institutions</i>	189
<i>Negotiating school and self</i>	200
<i>Strategizing success</i>	209
<i>"Things are harder for us"</i>	217
<i>Stress-ing success</i>	220
<i>At what cost?</i>	226
<i>Recommendations for school change</i>	227
 CHAPTER 6.	
The personal is political: Developing 'new' subjectivities through participatory action research	230
 <i>Participatory research and personal change</i>	231
<i>A post-structural perspective on conscientização</i>	235
<i>Conscientização</i>	240
<i>Re-construction</i>	249
<i>Contextualized subjectivities</i>	254
<i>On being angry</i>	259
<i>Collective subjectivities</i>	261
<i>Praxis</i>	263
 CHAPTER 7.	
Conclusion : What can we learn from young women?	267
 APPENDICES.	
Appendix 1	282
Flyer, information handout, application and reference form	
Appendix 2	287
Boundaries of original research site	
Appendix 3	288
Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of Young Urban Womyn of Color	
Appendix 4	301
Visual Model	
Appendix 5	303
Community-based strategies for challenging gentrification	
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	306

List of figures

Figure 1	
Map of research site.....	6
Figure 2	
Profiles of co-researchers.....	22
Figure 3	
Picture of “our wall”.....	27
Figure 4	
Picture of project room.....	27

Chapter 1.

Introduction

I was standing behind, I was walking down Columbia or something, and there were these three white frat boys in front of me and they were like (she imitates their voices) "Look at these people they totally don't understand like the value of the space around them. Like they got a lot of real estate value here. They don't know what they got." And I'm like yeah we do. We just value it differently--it's a different kind of value. You see dollar bills when you see that building. I see that that's *my* grandmother's house, you know. That's like, this is *my* history! This is *my* place! You know, and you just want to step in because you think I'm stupid because I'm living in the projects -- Riverfront property! You know, "prime real estate." (*Fed Up Honey*)

While gentrification is most often represented within the framework of real estate values, this leaves out not only its role in processes of community transformation, but also how it is experienced within a broader context of disenfranchisement by working class communities. This dissertation considers the experience of urban economic restructuring from the "inside" perspective of young working class women of color (aged 16-22) who have grown up in the Lower East Side neighborhood of New York City during the 1990s, a time of intensive gentrification, witnessing their neighborhood change while still living in it.

Questioning the valuation of the economic over the personal, of dollar bills over her connections to place, of profit-making over communitarian ideals (Gibson-Graham, 2002), one young woman conveys a sense of moral outrage that her history, her grandmother's house, is now considered "prime real estate." Why do the rights of property ownership trump her rights to stay in the neighborhood (Mitchell, 2003)? Challenging the commonplace perception of gentrification as an inevitable or natural

process, this young woman foregrounds the contested status of her neighborhood. Just like the signs neighborhood activists carried proclaiming “Lower East Side -- not for sale. This land is ours!” as they marched on city hall over twenty years ago to protest the city auctioning off properties to private interests (Abu-Lughod, 1994), she expresses ownership --“This is *my* place!”-- of the community where she has lived her whole life. After weathering years of disinvestment, now her family is threatened with social and spatial exclusion as the Lower East Side is gentrified.

If gentrification is “the new urban form of globalization” (Smith, 2002), then its analysis is vital to our understanding of how neoliberalism reconfigures the urban scale and who is excluded in the process. Critical in this regard is the role of representations that legitimate the contradictions of the new urban geography of inequality. My research focuses upon what Robin Kelley identifies as “the culture wars in urban America,” “the ongoing battle over representations ... and the significance of the cultural terrain as a site of struggle”(Kelley, 1997, 8). This is not just a matter of theoretical interest Kelley argues, as the culture wars “continue to rage each day in the streets of urban America” (Ibid). For young women living on the Lower East Side with whom I did research, the issue of public representations was of the utmost concern. Stereotypes of risk and the underclass remind young women of the disinvestment of *their* community, and are experienced as both a social betrayal and a public assault on their subjectivities.

If this is a theoretical project, engaging post structural theory to understand the role of discourse in facilitating processes of gentrification on the one hand, and the development of subjectivities on the other, it is also project of social justice. My dissertation connects representational theory to a structural analysis of social inequities. To this end, I ground theories of structural racism in a spatial analysis to reveal how

discourse “works” to discipline and threaten young working class women of color and their families. The struggle over young women’s subjectivity, over the rights to self-definition, I shall argue, is also about young women’s “rights to the city” (Mitchell, 2003). As Mitchell states “the very act of representing one’s group (or to some extent one’s self) to a larger public creates a space for representation. Representation both demands and takes up space”(Mitchell, 2003, 35). In this regard, the claim to self-representation is not only a claim to the rights to one’s body and a revaluation of one’s public identity, but the right to not be excluded from one’s own neighborhood. The connection between space and subjectivity is addressed in the comments of one young woman who describes the challenges young women face in the city:

They’re just not getting attention and what I mean by that is that they’re not thought of. .. Basically they’re just not considered. There’s no space made. They’re not considered for anything at all. They’re not prepared for life. They’re just there. Basically that’s how I think some people see teenage girls or just females in general. It’s like they’re just there.

“Just there;” stuck in place. Young women’s feelings of invisibility are reflected in the lack of space made for their concerns and needs. Don Mitchell would argue, however, that the claim for space is leveraged over “the active *taking* of space.. the fulcrum upon which the right to the city has been leveraged, both in its actual (limited) practice and in the way it can serve as a beacon for a more open, more just, more egalitarian society” (Mitchell, 2003, 10). In my analysis I try to show how the young women’s claim to define themselves, to take charge of their self-representations, is also an assertion of their right to space.

As it is we know little about young women’s everyday lives growing up in the city, and even less about their experiences of urban restructuring (Sharff, 1996; Cahill, 2000; Lipman, 2002; Muñiz, 1998). While young men (especially poor young men of color) are

closely surveilled in urban public spaces and social research (Kelley, 1997; Payne, 2001; Way et al., 2004), the diversity and range of young women's experiences in the city have not been taken seriously, despite the attention young women's bodies receive in popular media, social research, and on the street.

Especially significant for young women, who at this time in their lives are investigating and trying on possible selves, and making critical decisions about their future, is the discovery of places that support and expand their identities. Young women's perceptions of their lifespaces are at the center of this research. To provide a fuller understanding of the spectrum of young women's experiences living, working, and playing in the city, this study took a deliberately open theoretical and methodological approach. At the center of my research was a participatory action research (PAR) project that engaged six young women in a collective process of looking critically at their social and environmental contexts. My project builds upon examples of scholars working with young people to do research on their lives (see for example Torre & Fine, 2004; Chawla, 2002; Hart, 1997; Williams & Kornblum, 1985). The project was broadly conceptualized at the outset as the study of the "everyday lives of young women in the city" in order that it would be open and follow the lead of the young women involved. It was not known who would apply to participate in the project and what they would contribute.

Situating young urban women's perceptions of their own lives at the center of my research was a conscious political and theoretical undertaking. I developed this project 'digging where I stand' (Maguire, 2000), with a particular standpoint informed by my own experiences as a young woman growing up in the city. I grew up during the 1970s and early 80s on the edge of the Lower East Side, and as I have watched it change over the last 25 years I have become increasingly interested in the relationship between

neighborhood change and the experiences of young people living there. The neighborhood's complex overlapping histories of waves of immigration, of massive abandonment, of reinvestment, and new development are reflected in its various place-identities as the Lower East Side, Alphabet City, Loisaida, The East Village, and Da Sixth Boro. The contentious history of the Lower East Side gentrification is well documented (Mele, 2000; Smith, 1996; Abu-Lughod, 1994). If it was once one of the poorest communities in New York City, today the Lower East Side might best be characterized today as a neighborhood in transition, its future is still contested (even if some think they see the handwriting on the wall).

The area of the Lower East Side that is of concern for my dissertation research is still undergoing dramatic changes. This area, which is below 14th Street, east of Avenue B, and above the Williamsburg Bridge (Figure 1), has been identified with communities of color in recent history. It includes Loisaida, the public housing projects, and the areas adjacent to them. Not coincidentally, this is also the area of the neighborhood that experienced the most disinvestment and neglect in the 1970s and 80s, and which only in the last ten years or so has been visibly undergoing processes of gentrification. It is a raw space in the sense that Gloria Anzaldúa describes a borderland, like "the US-Mexican border, es una herida abierta where the third world grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again" (Anzaldúa, 1999, 25). There is little research looking at what it means to live in a gentrifying/still disinvested neighborhood for young people and young women in particular. What are the experiences of young women who live in a borderland?

Figure 1

Research Site (at different scales)



While many issues of concern were raised by the young women involved in the participatory action research project, what the group mobilized around, and what they decided to focus their project on was the issue of stereotypes in a project they entitled "Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of young urban womyn of color." Specifically they formulated questions having to do with how the community's lack of resources (disinvestment) feeds into both stereotyping and young women's well-being and self-understanding. In choosing to research the issue of representations, the young women focused their analysis on the public sphere, the discursive arena of representation, and how it is constructed in different locations (even though the project is grounded in their personal neighborhood experiences). This focus is an important contribution to the literature on women in the city which has narrowly focused on women's experiences in public space, and which is how I had originally conceived of the study. Shifting the scale of analysis is significant not the least because it reflects a different set of social issues connected to intersections of race, class and gender. A concern with physical assault was less significant for the young women who chose instead to focus on the social assault upon their public (and private) identities.

Focusing on the public sphere is a complicated enterprise which requires taking into account its 'aspatiality' and how it is constructed differently at various scales of analysis. In this regard, I engage the concept of scale not as a location, but as a lens of analysis or 'entry point' for understanding political, economic, and cultural processes (Gibson-Graham, 2002; Marston et al., 2004). How for example the representation of a young working class woman of color as "lazy and on welfare" is constituted at different scales of analysis, for example, in the media, in public policy, in a public school setting, in the workplace, or in a young woman's own desires and decision-making processes. To understand the role of representations in young women's everyday lives as they inform

processes of gentrification and subject formation, suggests a dynamic interpretative framework which can account for the disorientation between being 'stuck in place' and the 'flow of capital' associated with processes of gentrification, in order to situate young women in a shifting topography which is both global and local. Within this framework, the global and local are understood not in binary terms, but rather as interpretative frames on a set of relations or "particular moment" (Gibson-Graham, 2002, 31-2). As Gibson – Graham argue "scratch anything "global" and you find locality-grounded practices in factories, stock exchanges, retail outlets, and communities" (Gibson-Graham, 2002, 32), suggesting that instead we might even think of multinational firms as multilocal rather than global. To this end, my research of young women's place-based politics and their local experiences of gentrification/ disinvestment on the Lower East Side could be understood as an opening for understanding how global economic restructuring is constituted and resisted at the urban and other scales.

Connecting the dots between their individual experiences in schools, housing, jobs, and the neighborhood, the young women collectively developed what Cindi Katz (2001) identifies as a "topography for feminist political engagement," a "grounded but translocal politics," which highlights the contours of differently situated experiences (Katz, 2001, 1231). Through a collective process of comparing each others' personal experiences the young women developed a collective social analysis. Because theory is developed within the project as opposed to framed by the concerns of the literature, there are more opportunities for challenging the dominant perspective. The Makes Me Mad project not only contests the academic literature's preoccupation with young women's bodies, but also contributes to the literature on gender and the city which has focused on women's experiences in public space, often foregrounding fear.

In this regard, the Makes Me Mad project points to some of the radical possibilities of PAR. Not only did the young women involved transform themselves, but they also pushed scholarship in new directions, asking new questions, questioning old assumptions, and engaging the contradictions of their everyday lives. This was not an easy process. For one, this meant confronting the anger and stigma attached to living in the “ghetto” and related deficit social constructions. In addition, it involved negotiating individual and structural interpretations of their experiences, shifting between multiple contradictory positions of their subjectivity. Herein lay the struggle. It is, as Mary Louise Pratt identifies it, a “struggle for interpretative power” (1999) within what she defines as a “contact zone,” a space of encounter where “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as slavery, colonialism, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world” (1992, 4). The contact zone could be a lens of analysis, or it could be a location like the Lower East Side, or even a subject position. In any case, the emphasis in the contact zone is upon interaction and power. In this dissertation I trace the ways in which power combines with representations and how this plays out in the urban geography of the Lower East Side.

There is, however, much more to the story, as expressed in the Makes Me Mad project. Here following a long line of dissenters, which include scholars and activists of color, women and the working class, and people working towards social justice, the young women collectively develop a narrative framework for re-interpreting their experiences. In so doing, they engage in the “culture wars,” offering an important counterpoint to the discourses of gentrification which privilege the values of real estate, of the economic, of the global economy, over the needs of young women and their communities. In short, the young women construct a discourse challenging sociospatial policies and practices

rooted in economic and social priorities that produce inequality in their neighborhood and the broader context of their everyday lives.

Structure of the dissertation

In my dissertation I trace the connections between public representations of young working class women of color and the disinvestment and gentrification of the Lower East Side neighborhood, in order to understand how social problems at the intersection of race, class and gender are defined and wrapped around real and hypothetical bodies. In turn, I explore how young women negotiate, accommodate, and challenge deficit stereotypes while constructing their subjectivities through a participatory action research project. Bridging the material and psychological, my analysis focuses upon the socio-spatial constitution of identities in its consideration of how young women struggle to interpret and make sense of their experiences growing up on the Lower East Side. I argue that how young women define their relationship to their neighborhood is intimately connected with how they understand their selves. In fact, this relationship is the subject of much debate between the young women researchers. In the process of arguing, explaining their perspectives, and listening to each other, together the young women develop a collective subject position. This 'new' subjectivity is based on anger, frustration, a shared situated standpoint forged at the intersection of race, class, and gender, and the bifurcated perspective of being the Other. In the end, the young women researchers dedicated their research project to challenging stereotypes in order to "expose the ways stereotypes oversimplify, reduce and limit us" (Rios-Moore, 2004). In Drawing connections between the lack of resources in their community and stereotypes of young working class women of color, the Fed Up Honeys outline a basis for what I argue could be an effective anti-gentrification discourse, one that engages head on in

the politics of representation in the struggle for self-definition and one's "rights to the city," which at the very least encompass not being excluded from one's neighborhood.

In Chapter 2 I share a detailed account of the research process from both a methodological and theoretical perspective. I outline the methodological twists and turns of the project including, for example, how to structure the project and yet keep it open. Or the value of rituals of writing and reflecting as a methodological practice when not everyone had the same comfort level with these forms of expression. And how we negotiated some of challenges of this immersive methodological approach including issues of race/ethnicity, positionality, and power. At the same time I situate my project within a critical history of participatory research. If the value of PAR as a research approach "of use" and a vehicle of social change is well documented, there is less attention in the literature to its generative methodological role in producing new knowledge (Fine et al., 2003). My analysis focuses on three critical contributions: the inclusion of underrepresented perspectives in research; the emphasis upon a relational analysis; and knowledge as "the struggle for interpretative power" (Pratt, 1999).

How does discourse function in relation to urban restructuring? Not enough attention has been paid to the critical role of representations in facilitating processes of gentrification in the literature (Wilson et al., 2004; Smith, 1996). In Chapter 3 I look at how stereotypes of 'the other' serve to blame, regulate, legitimate social inequalities, mediate contradictions of capitalism, and project social anxieties onto the bodies of young women. Focusing on selected moments in history I trace productions of the "other half," the tangle of pathology, and the 'underclass' in the historical geographies of the Lower East Side. This provides the groundwork for understanding how stereotypes of risk function in a neoliberal context.

How young working class women of color make sense of processes of gentrification and disinvestment is the subject of chapter 4, filling what Loretta Lees identifies as “the ethnographic void” in the gentrification literature (2003). In this chapter I address the pressures young women express as their neighborhood changes dramatically over the course of their lives, offering a subjective perspective on urban restructuring which is missing from the literature (but see Alicea, 2001; Muñiz, 1998). Foregrounded is the young women’s experience of the violence of disinvestment and the threat of exclusion associated with whiteness. What does it mean to witness your neighborhood transform while you’re still in it? As opposed to the “root shock” of displacement (Fullilove, 2004), the young women expressed their feelings of loss as their history and culture were erased from their neighborhood (while they still live in it). This research will then also contribute to the scholarship on place attachment an understanding of how processes of gentrification compromise people’s connection to their home community (Altman & Low, 2002). Connecting urban and psychological development, my analysis considers young women’s negotiations of their contradictory situated subject positions; the tensions between their desire to stay and give back to their community –what Carol Gilligan (1982) calls an “ethic of care;” and wanting to escape its problems.

In chapter 5 I look at what young working class women of color are learning in school on the Lower East Side. Examining young women’s experiences in school provides a case study for understanding how stereotypes are produced and negotiated within a particular environmental context. This chapter looks at the construction of subjectivity up close through an analysis of student performances in order to understand better how young women inhabit, accommodate, and resist deficit representations of “uneducated,” “ambitionless,” and “lazy,” among other stereotypes

Chapter 6 considers the development of 'new' subjectivities as part of a participatory action research process from a post structural perspective in order to contribute to theories of participation and social change. In this regard, I reconsider Freire's conceptualization of conscientização engaging issues of power relevant to feminist, critical race, and social justice scholarship. My analysis foregrounds the politics of personal development. To this end, I discuss how the researchers collectively developed a new narrative framework for re-interpreting their personal experiences of gentrification and disinvestment.

What can we learn from young working class women of color? If young women are analogous to the miner's canary who would alert the miners of poison in the air, their distress "the first sign of a danger that threatens us all" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, 12), we need to listen to them. In Chapter 7 I conclude the dissertation with an analysis of the Makes Me Mad project, and its collective articulation of young women's concerns for the neighborhood. Here I draw connections between the young women's self-representations and their staking out viable positions in their neighborhood. Within this framework, the rights to their bodies are also understood as the "rights to the city." This in turn is a jumping off point for discussing the critical role of representations in challenging global economic restructuring. In the end, this dissertation aims to open up the public conversation about global economic restructuring at the local scale to include the concerns of young women, their families, and all of us who do not privilege economic concerns over our grandmother's house, our history, and our place!

Chapter 2.

The struggle for interpretative power: The theory and methods of a participatory action research process

July 18, 2002. Following is an excerpt from a conversation between the researchers as they start to develop their research project and identify the questions they want to explore.

Carmen: I think like that women... oh fuck it. I'm just going to read (reads from her journal): I think that we should like focus a little bit on women and their relationship to the neighborhood and the challenges that they face because of the report that you read. It seemed that society, well like the neighborhood puts out an image about how women should act cause they in a certain neighborhood. And I think that's a crime. To me. ..so I think that then we should focus on that.

CC: On kinda, what are the real challenges that women are facing in their neighborhood as opposed to the idea that —this kinda falls under “combating stereotypes,” ‘cause on some level, ‘cause instead of focusing on that women behave a certain way in a certain neighborhood- but instead -what are the challenges for women in that neighborhood. Is that what you're saying?

Carmen: Yeah because like to me it seems that just because somebody comes that doesn't know anything about the neighborhood, and never lived here for like quite as long like we have, and get to know everyone in the neighborhood... That they come and they say it seems like women in this neighborhood act like this and that and when people see that. People be like ‘oh it's true—look’ and they do it. And like you know, and, that doesn't seem like it's right.

Ruby: Carmen, weren't you just talking about how the lady came in the neighborhood and she doesn't know anything about the people but yet she tries to define why they act this way. Right? And were you saying that after she put out the article, or after people put out articles about the stereotypes about the people that live in the neighborhoods, the people act like that?

Carmen: Yeah because people are saying like—the strawberries are red. And you like ... yeah that's true, they are red. And you're going to say it too. And that's like you're doing something and you don't know that you're doing it and yet when somebody tells you, you do it even more.

Ruby: Yeah. That's just what I was going to say. They're reacting to the stereotype. And making them true. More realistic.

CC: Okay. What is the power of stereotypes? How do stereotypes become reinforced or --

Carmen: True.

CC: Or become true?

Annissa: They become a part of -

Carmen: I didn't make myself clear before--

CC: No- I think you are expressing a really complicated idea and I think we are all trying to figure out how to best say it.

Carmen: Sorry. Alright.

CC: No-

Ruby: I don't want to think about something that you weren't really saying. I'm just trying to get a better idea of it.

Annissa: I think most importantly once they become marketed they become the only means for us to get the kind of attention that we need. It makes me think of minstrel shows. Black people would never run around in black face but that was their only way that they could get the money that they needed-

Ruby: That's what they have to do.

Jasmine: And now you see these rappers doing the same thing. Hos, bitches, and hos types of thing.

....

CC: But just to get back to what Carmen was saying... How stereotypes become ways that people understand themselves and that the challenges that people are facing is explained as these stereotypes. And that becomes then the way that people understand it. Do you know what I mean?

Carmen: I think we got it.

Carmen: You said it really good before. Once. Like "reinforce," use that word.

Annissa: Reinforcing the stereotypes leads to self-characterization.

Carmen: Well, I don't know those words.

Annissa: The way you characterize yourself. The way you see yourself. Like if you were going to explain yourself. That's how you would explain yourself to other people.

Jasmine: Like your self-description.

Annissa: I think even worse and more upsetting, is that when we reinforce the stereotypes for ourselves, because that's what we see and that's what we think

only exists. The few people that break out of the stereotypes start to think that they're better than everyone else and it's mainly because they think they achieved some great feat by getting outside of that stereotype because they've been shat on by their own community by breaking out of it. You know? It's like this terrible little window that goes on and on .. and round and round

Jasmine: And then people in the community think they've sold out and then they start to sell out.

Annissa: Out of rebellion. And so everybody thinks they're rebelling against each other but really their just like playing the same game.

Welcome to "The everyday lives of young women in the city project," summer 2002, a participatory action research project in which a group of six young women researchers critically examine their home community—the Lower East Side neighborhood of New York City—sometimes making painful connections between economic restructuring and their own everyday lives, uncovering relationships between the lack of resources in their neighborhood and distorted perceptions of young women of color. In the above excerpt of conversation the young women researchers were engaged in problem identification. They were starting to focus their research concerns and develop research questions, building new knowledge collaboratively. The process was unwieldy, rich, and constructive. It was sometimes slow, and involved checking back with the group, clarifying – "I'm just trying to get a better idea of it", "well... I don't know those words," "do you understand what I mean?," "wait—what are you talking about? I'm lost!" Sometimes it was a fluid process, "Amen. I feel you, I was thinking the same thing," where our ideas were bouncing back and forth and it feels like we are growing something between us. And then other times it abruptly digressed into something else altogether, "Yo, did you see J Lo on MTV cribs last night?" or "how much did you say those pants cost again?" Building upon each other's ideas, shifting the discussion in different directions, drawing from their personal experiences, the researchers collaboratively created their project as they started to compare and then identify shared

social issues as expressed in the title of their project “Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of young urban women of color.”

In this chapter I outline the step-by-step process of doing a PAR project for my dissertation research, while at the same time raising questions that speak to theory and point to the high and low lights of the approach. The principles of participatory action research are particularly relevant to the study of the everyday experiences of young working class women of color in the urban environment. PAR starts with social concerns and personal experiences, values the knowledge produced through collaboration and in action, places emphasis upon the research process, and reconsiders the value of research as a vehicle for social change (Fine & Barreras, 2001; Fine et al, 2001; Torre et al., 2001; Hart, 1997). The PAR approach is also germane to the spatial focus of my dissertation research. The process foregrounds contextualized knowledge while placing an emphasis upon social theorizing that creates an opportunity for an analysis of issues and problems at different scales. Building upon the insights and methodological advances developed in feminist inquiry, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, community research, and geographical research concerned with social (in)justice and inclusion, my approach is structured by a commitment to exchange and collaboration.

Rooted in the pioneering work of Latin American activist researchers and educators Orlando Fals-Borda (1979) and Paolo Freire (1997), and social researchers in urban American contexts including Jane Addams (Sabo, 2003a) and Kurt Lewin (1946,1952), PAR was a process developed for the explicit purpose of creating conditions for social change, to be used by the community for their own purposes. Participatory research approaches identify the benefits of emphasizing the perspectives of marginalized groups, challenging social exclusion, redistributing power within the research process,

and building ordinary people's capacity to analyze and transform their own lives (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004; Pain, 2004; Fine et al., 2003; Hart, 1997).

Situating young working class women of color's interpretations of their own lives at the center of this research project was a conscious political and theoretical undertaking. It is a challenge to what Robin D.G. Kelley identifies as the 'ghetto ethnographers' who ignore the hybridity and internal differences of poor, working class, Black and Latino cultures, in their search to identify authenticity, "the 'real' nigga" (Kelley, 1997). Kelley argues that in the process social scientists "unwittingly reduce their subjects to cardboard typologies who fit neatly into their own definition of the underclass and render invisible a wide array of complex cultural forms and practices" (Kelley, 1998, 41; Kelley, 1997). He argues that social scientists bear "responsibility for turning ghetto residents into an undifferentiated mass" (Kelley, 1998, 59). This is what Foucault identified as the 'subjectifying social sciences' (Hall, 1997a, 43), calling attention to how relations of power and representation produce particular types of subjects. To this end, Ella Bell suggests the Black community was understandably mistrustful and resentful of White social scientists: "People knew that sociologists have been used by government agencies to develop more sophisticated techniques for the control of poor people" (Bell, 2001, 51). Or as one of African American anthropologist John Langston Gwaltney's informants put it: "I think this anthropology is just another way to call me a nigger" (Gwaltney, 1981, 24 cited in Kelley, 1998, 44). Within this context a participatory action research approach is all the more important because it challenges social inequalities as they are understood and experienced by those subjected to them, such as the young working class urban women of color with whom I worked.

Recent critiques of participatory research, however, suggest a mismatch between the theory and practice of participation that warrant our attention (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). In this regard, we need to pay attention to overly broad applications of the term participation which mask realities of tokenism, manipulation, and the illusion of consultation, and serve to legitimate and advance dominant interests (Kesby, in press, Pain & Francis, 2003; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hart, 1997). Critics argue that participation is too often presented as a set of techniques rather than a commitment to the values of participation, resulting in the reproduction of unequal power relations (Taylor, 2001; Maguire, 2000; Hart, 1997). Another critical issue raised is the emphasis upon consensus while overlooking differences within the community and reducing the complexity of the diverse perspectives within (Kothari, 2001). Related to this concern is the romanticization of local or “inside” knowledge (Mosse, 2001; Mohan, 2001), an emphasis upon local experience, and a failure to theorize connections to broader social processes (Kesby, in press).

Keeping this in mind, in the following discussion I address the principles of PAR in connection with my research as a way of describing in broad brushstrokes the methodological and theoretical issues of *doing* PAR research (See chapter 6 for a discussion of the research process as a site for critical consciousness). The outline of the PAR project that follows offers a broad overview of what was a very complex, intense and rich experience.

“Digging where I stand”...

My interest in doing research on young women’s everyday lives in cities is informed by my own autobiography. I developed this project “digging where I stand” (Maguire, 2000),

with a particular standpoint and social concerns informed by my own experiences growing up in New York City. I grew up on the edge of the Lower East Side neighborhood in the 1970s and 80s and, as I watched it change dramatically over the last twenty-five years, I became increasingly interested in the relationship between neighborhood change and the experiences of the young women who live in it. Once one of the poorest communities in Manhattan, the Lower East Side is today cited and studied as an example of gentrification, even if reinvestment has been slow to come in many aspects and areas (Mitchell, 2003; Mele, 2000; Smith, 1996). When I met with prospective young women participants I introduced my interest in doing this research along these lines, explaining how there is little research looking at what these changes mean for young people and young women in particular (Sharff, 1998; Cahill, 2000). We don't know or understand young urban women's concerns, desires, or struggles as they relate to their surroundings. Where do young women feel comfortable? feel unsafe? Why? What is important to young women? The young women I met with had a lot to say especially with regard to the changes they noticed in their neighborhood.

Rather than adopting a "value-neutral" or "objective" position, I explicitly identified myself as an advocate of young people and young women's concerns in particular, inspired by feminist researchers and scholars of color (Bell, 2001; Fine et al., 2003; Kelley, 1997; Katz, 1994; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1987) who identify and reflect upon their own subjectivities as a part of a self-reflexive research practice. The stated focus of my dissertation research was to study and understand young urban women's experiences and their own interpretations of the urban environment. The project was very broadly defined at the outset in order that it would be open enough to follow the lead of the young women involved. I wanted to create a project reflecting young urban women's concerns and perceptions of their own everyday lives. It was not known who would apply

and what they would contribute. I left the study undefined so that the objectives of the project would be determined collaboratively by everyone involved.

Participants (co-researchers) & setting

Six young women were recruited to participate as co-researchers¹ in the PAR project through neighborhood schools and community centers. Not only did I leave flyers advertising the research project and applications (appendix 1) with guidance counselors, teachers, and youth workers, I also did presentations on the proposed research project at schools in order to recruit participants. In order to participate, prospective researchers had to be young women between the ages of 16 and 22 and live within the defined boundaries of the Lower East Side neighborhood (see appendix 2). Prospective researchers were asked to fill out an application which included a short essay about their interest in participating, and subsequently all potential researchers were interviewed who met the aforementioned criteria and who had basic writing skills. A diverse group of young women were selected broadly reflecting the neighborhood demographics.

“We are Chinese, Puerto Rican, African-American, Dominican, and Black-Latina. As diverse as we are, personalities included, we seemed to click instantly and our conversations flowed. We fed off each others’ ideas and we built on them as well. We spoke of personal experiences, shared our writings and discussed world issues we felt were impacting us.” Erica Arenas, researcher (www.fed-up-honeys.org, 2004).

¹ The young women involved are identified as “researchers”, rather than participants, reflecting their role in all aspects of the project. I make the distinction between researcher and academic researcher for clarification purposes in the text.

Figure 2

Profiles

at the start of the project (summer 2002)

Alice, 17, immigrated from China 2 years ago. She attends the bilingual program in the zoned public high school of the Lower East Side. She prioritizes her education, is very worried about her English skills and her ability to succeed. Although she hates to work in restaurants she does this over 30 hours a week. "People see me as: easy to get along with, I know what I want to do, I have high self-esteem" But "how I really am: I am scared of everything, afraid I can not get what I want, I have low self-esteem, I always struggle. " "What I am thinking about the most: The future--If I can be what I want to be. "

Annissa, 22, is a Black Latina raised in the projects of the Lower East Side by a single parent. " I have managed to stay out of "trouble", remain morally and spiritually grounded, and aim for my goals. It seems cliché because it is, but from an outsider's view this is what makes me unique even though there are thousands of other young people out there that are just like me." After attending 6 different public schools Annissa dropped out of high school and home-schooled herself. She attends an elite women's private college.

Carmen, 16, is a Dominican young woman who grew up on the Lower East Side and attends her zoned public high school. She says "school is not for me," she can't wait to finish it. She thinks maybe she will get involved in a travel related business. She is very family-oriented and worries about everyone else all the time. "What is special about me: I have a great personality. I tell stupid but funny stories. I have a great attitude. How people see me: Older than I look, rude, that I have an attitude, and I'm angry. How I really am: I am this wonderful person that wants to help but I don't want people to know it. I love everyone but I don't show it."

Janderie, 19, is Puerto Rican, born in Brooklyn and grew up on the Lower East Side where she attended an alternative high school. She has recently left college, a State University in upstate New York, but plans to attend a CUNY college. She wants to be a high school guidance counselor. "My biggest flaw: I put my energy into those who don't deserve it and I neglect those who do; Childhood dream: To be rich and famous; Something that isn't true about me: I say I don't care but I really do; Where I spend most of my time: In my head."

Jasmine, 18, just graduated from a high school in Lower Manhattan specializing in math and science. She "hated every minute of it." She is now off to a State University where she wants to specialize in health. "I am a very emotional person and hide my feelings. I don't like conflict and try to keep people happy. I also am a "walking contradiction" because I always have different views on issues. It depends on the day you catch me. The way my mind works is like entering the world's most difficult maze with many layers."

Ruby, 18, is African American, grew up in Harlem but lived with her aunt on the Lower East Side for the past four years so she could attend the neighborhood zoned public high school. She just graduated and is now about to start a two year program in Opthamology at a CUNY college. Her plan is to then go to Howard and get her Masters in Child Psychology so she can have her own clinic. I am "calm, cool, and collected at times. Extremely inquisitive, smart, and good looking. Like most people, worry a lot. Have a semi-short attention span. Loves to eat, sleep, and be merry (includes movies, cards, reading, talk/on phone, and shopping). Love to learn, hate to work in a "worky" environment."

The young women involved were, as Erica pointed out, diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture, even if all identified as working class or working poor (see figure 2). While diversity is often categorized in terms of social categories such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender, difference can be understood in much more complexity, as Indra's identification of our personality traits reveals (Cahill et al., 2004, 234):

We're almost like a boy band with members that meet pre-prescribed personality types that are different enough for any teenage girl to have a favorite. Alice is quiet and shy with an undercover bravery of spirit; Shamara is loud and jovial but truly a sensitive person; Jennifer is also loud but is a story teller who takes guff from no one and is not a big fan of school but is an excellent business woman; Tiffany is quiet and reserves judgments but when she decides to talk she lets out pearls of true wisdom; Erica is all tough on the outside but is really very sweet on the inside with a propensity for crying; Caitlin is the kind soul that keeps us all on track and at the same time makes sure that we feel free enough to let loose- she's the glue; and I'm the crazy one, I let loose with random useless facts, make weird sounds for no good reason that anyone can discern, and am the anti-establishment representative of the group.

The differences between us were especially striking to all involved. It was exciting to relate to each other across difference, to learn about new ways of seeing the world and to articulate our specific situated positions. Even though all the young women lived in the same neighborhood, they lived in very different communities. Not only did the young women researchers define their neighborhood in different terms, they also identified with multiple and diverse communities which included ethnic and racial communities, subcultures such as hip hop culture, and geographical communities defined by their block or within particular boundaries.

Throughout the dissertation the young women are identified in two different ways to honor their desire to self-identify while at the same time protecting their privacy. While this may be confusing to the reader it is purposeful. On the one hand, the young women involved have chosen to identify themselves publicly in a collectively authored book

chapter and report. These are presentations of the self that the researchers have consciously constructed and chosen to share with the public. On the other hand, in the dissertation I draw from my field notes and make use of quotes from transcripts of taped discussions between the young women during the research project. As distinguished from public presentations, these are private conversations that took place behind closed doors. When I quote from private conversations I identify each researcher using an alias to protect her confidentiality (see Figure 2). What this means for the reader is that it was not possible to present a fluid narrative or a seamless presentation of young women's life stories. Instead the reader is forced to navigate a fragmented, shifting, and somewhat disorienting presentation of young women's identities (that is also in keeping with post structural conceptualizations of subjectivity).

The young women researchers were paid a stipend for their participation in the participatory action research project which initially involved a four week commitment of twenty hours each week. Paying the researchers for their participation was an epistemological and practical issue. In keeping with the stated objectives of the proposed research that explicitly critique the lack of opportunities for young people, I wanted to provide an alternative, work experience for young people other than the few options working in the service industry for multinational corporations getting paid minimum wage (such as Duane Reade, KFC, Burger King, to name a few places of former occupation). After a few days into the project, one of the young women, Carmen, expressed her family's surprise that she was actually getting paid to write. "Yes, I am getting paid to write," she took great pride in this. Paid to write and paid to think.

While I am certainly aware that the issue of payment might be questioned on the grounds of biasing young people's participation in research, I would counter that paying

the researchers serves to 'level the playing field' as it attracts both those who need a job, who couldn't afford not to work, and those who could. If I didn't pay the researchers for their time, the project would effectively rule out many young women's involvement. The fact is, it would be unrealistic and unfair to assume that anyone, excepting the very privileged, could afford to work almost full-time for a month without being paid.

The project was not conceived as a one off exercise in participation, a focus group to survey young women's perspectives, a series of open-ended interviews to sample of young women's opinions, or a quick and dirty participatory appraisal in which young women map their neighborhood environments. Understood from the beginning was a considerable commitment of time and energy for all involved. In this light, the project was originally designed as a four-week project, meeting five hours a day. Even so, this schedule underestimated the amount of time we would need for our research process. At the end of the first month we had not yet finished the development of the research products (described below). The project received funding² which allowed us to continue to work together for a subsequent month (4 of 6 researchers worked the following month) and we have continued to work together on and off since then depending upon project deadlines, funding, and availability. To date we have created a website (www.fed-up-honeys.org); published our research report "Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of young urban womyn of color" (appendix 3; Rios-Moore et al., 2004); presented our research at a conference (Ethnography in Education conference; University of Pennsylvania, 2003); and collaborated on a book chapter together (Cahill et al., 2004). More to come.

² We are indebted to ActKnowledge Inc. for their support of our research and development of research products. Thank you! Check out their website www.actknowledge.org

Our project was based at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. We had a small dedicated project room within the Center for Human Environments with a table around which seven of us crowded. Here is how one of the researchers described her perception of the room on the first day:

We entered the room where we would be conducting our research, the room where we would be spending all our time, and I felt a sudden case of claustrophobia kick in. There was barely enough floor space for all of us to stand at the same time. ... The buzzing of the lights above was louder than our breathing.

Moving your chair in any direction was a challenge. On the left side of our room the wall was covered with yellow paper which served as our collective memory, a common space for taking notes, making lists, and writing down shared issues (figure 3). On the back wall was mounted several maps of the Lower East Side including a photograph of the neighborhood where we identified where we live, and to which we referred occasionally. On the right side were bookshelves upon which we kept resources about the Lower East Side, project materials, and office supplies. There was a tape recorder to the right of the door and a big microphone on the table (figure 4).

Meeting at the university was a practical and epistemological decision. Not only did we have access to resources such as photocopying, printers, the library, telephones, and computers, but we also had access to other researchers who were based at the Graduate Center with whom we met formally and informally on different occasions. Although less busy during the summer, the university setting did provide researchers with a sense of what it was like to work within a research setting, and was, in a sense an introduction to an academic environment for those who had not yet gone to college.

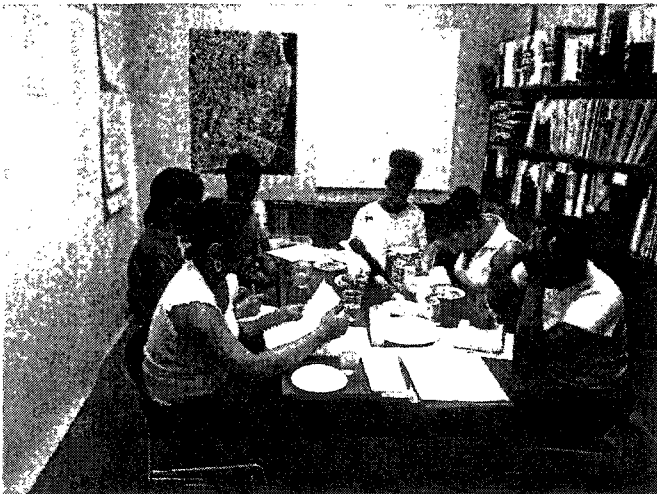
Figure 3

"Our wall"



Figure 4

The project room



While at first most of the researchers perceived the university setting as intimidating, after a little while they were very familiar and comfortable, even working independently

when I was not present on several occasions, and eating lunch everyday in the university cafeteria.

Situating the PAR project within the university space was also a theoretical move. I wanted to challenge the neat divide between the ivory tower and community-based research, between the academy and activism (Ruddick, 2004), and between who is inside and who is outside the spaces of knowledge production. Rather than engage in research 'beyond the academy' (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004) positioning the project inside creates a possibility of disrupting or re-working the academic status quo from within. Redefining the purposes, audiences and approaches to doing research, the PAR offers an internal critique of traditional academic praxis. Located within the actual physical concrete spaces of the academic institution, the project was not an abstract or theoretical challenge, but a spatial presence.

In this regard, I wanted to create a space where the researchers would express themselves, take control, and make it their own. Ownership was not an end goal, but an integral part of a participatory process. As Myles Horton explains (1990, 227): "I think it's important to understand that the quality of the process you use to get to a place determines the ends, so when you want to build a democratic society, you have to act democratically in every way. If you want love and brotherhood, you've got to incorporate them as you go along, because you can't just expect them to occur in the future without experiencing them before you get there." Welcoming the young women was taken seriously. The researchers were my guests in an unfamiliar institutional setting which had the potential to be intimidating. Rather than "establishing trust" with "informants" in order to gain information (a spurious approach to research), making the researchers feel comfortable in the space and creating a warm atmosphere was understood along the

lines of hospitality. Doing collaborative work of this nature is based around developing relationships and even potential friendships. To this end, in the spirit of community-building, rituals of food are a critical component of creating a social environment.

On a more practical level, orientating the researchers to the university was also quite important. This included a tour of the school, personalization of our workspace, introductions with various key staff members, and getting security identification cards for all so that the researchers could pass independently and smoothly throughout the university setting. I am fortunate to work in a university setting where staff members are consistently friendly and warm. Security guards welcomed researchers with a smile in the morning and staff members near our office came by to check in with us often. To date we continue to meet at the Graduate Center thanks to the support and flexibility of the Center for Human Environments. In addition to our project base at the GC, we also spent time on the Lower East Side doing field research at various sites and getting together for occasional meetings and meals, most recently a BBQ at a neighborhood community garden hosted by Carmen's family.

An open structure

My dissertation research was purposely undefined, as mentioned previously, in order that the participants would shape the project according to their needs, concerns, and interests. Would the young women echo trends in the literature on women and the urban environments which forefront a discourse of fear (Pain, 1991)? Or reproduce the findings of the research on urban youth which emphasizes their absence from public space? Could they add a new perspective to the gentrification literature? Would they take the

project in a totally unexpected direction? What would I (we) learn from the young women who decided to participate in the project?

I titled the research project “The everyday lives of young women in the city” to reflect the very broad focus on the study. Its stated purpose was to understand better young women’s experiences in the urban environment, to document where young women living on the Lower East Side spend their time, what they like and don’t like about their neighborhood, and to explore their concerns and questions about their neighborhood. The project flyer and application emphasizes the youth-driven nature of the project (appendix 1):

“A team of 6-8 youth researchers, young women who live on Lower East Side, will be trained in social research methods and will conduct research on the way they use their neighborhood, where they spend time, and if their neighborhood supports their particular needs. Youth Researchers will design and implement a research project investigating their concerns in their neighborhood.”

“Research questions include: Where do you spend time in your neighborhood? What places do you like? Dislike? Why? How do you think your neighborhood could be improved to meet your needs? What are your concerns and questions?”

At the outset the participants/researchers were positioned as the experts. Their experiences and perspective guided the project. What matters to YOU? The openness of the research agenda was interpreted by the researchers as a lack of structure, an unusual and different experience for most involved, noteworthy enough to reflect upon in their book chapter (Cahill et al., 2004):

Indra: (speaking on the lack of strict structure at inception of project) the fact that we had a very loose idea of what we were there to do gave us an opportunity to make the space our own and to express our thoughts and ideas more freely.

Tiffany: The unstructuredness of the project was great for me. I like not having barriers or a strict schedule of work to follow. It gave us time to get to know everyone and talk about what we wanted to do. Also it made me feel like the project was actually ours.

Alice: I like structure. It allows me to know what to do. I like the way no one is telling me to do this or that but for me, in this situation—working with people from totally different backgrounds than me I would rather have someone to set up a topic for me or tell me what I should do. Otherwise I don't know how to satisfy them because I don't know what they want.

Indra: Because we were at CUNY, clearly an educational setting, there was potential for us to feel intimidated or feel that there were going to be specific expectations of us, but because we only knew we were going to be there to do some level of discussion and because our activities were loose enough to be group directed they resulted in shared thoughts and ideas that were particularly unique to us as a group.

Tiffany: If it was more structured it would have felt like school to me, and I know Caitlin was worried about coming off as a teacher but she wasn't. She gave us the opportunity to speak our minds about every and anything even if it was racial. Though at times we were rushed to get work done because of little time and much conversation, we are proud of our work and of how much we have gotten done. For me the unstructured ness help me to develop ideas on what to do and made it easier to work knowing there were no barriers. The most important thing for me to be able to do this work was it not feeling like school.

A perceived lack of structure can be confusing and anxiety provoking or it can be experienced as freeing, “no barriers,” “an opportunity to make the space our own,” in a way that is very different from restrictive and highly programmed school environments. In fact, while the project was undefined, it was not unstructured. It was, however, not a straightforward process, and it was messy and collaborative. This was an admittedly different way to working which was unsettling at first for some who were used to following directions and who were not sure how to contribute to a very open process. In facet for some of the young women who were used to working in the service industry doing manual or repetitive work the research project introduced a very different way of working which did not fit into their definition of work. Sitting around and talking about ideas important to them personally did not feel like “work.”

I had purposely left a lot of room (maybe too much room?) in the process in order that there was space available for the unexpected to occur, for researchers to fill gaps (literally and theoretically) with their bodies, desires, and concerns.

A collaborative process

According to Torre & Fine (in press), one of the fundamental principles of PAR is “an insistence on analyzing power dynamics and social-positionality within the research collective and to analyzing *dissonance* and *dissent* as potential sites of knowledge rather than silencing them.” But what does this mean in practice?

Collaboration is a messy enterprise. It involves engaging difference and relations of power. It is a space where differently situated people “meet, clash and grapple with each other”, in effect a contact zone, as Mary Louise Pratt (1992, 4) defines it, a space not only of asymmetrical relations of power, but also a lens of analysis where difference is interrogated (Torre, 2003; 2005). For example, early on we addressed the issue of my whiteness: ‘What does it mean for me, the facilitator, to be a white older woman? This is an especially relevant concern in a context where most white middle-aged females in the young women’s experience are teachers, authority figures who are from outside of their community. Acknowledging race, and whiteness in particular, was not only a critical step to creating space for discussing differences, it also served to disrupt the power connected to the ‘invisibility’ of whiteness. Another issue that was put on the table was the stark differences in educational backgrounds amongst the researchers. The researchers represented experiences across the spectrum, including going to an elite private college, being in the country for only two years still struggling with communication

skills, and being underserved in segregated settings of public education (see chapter 5). Instead of smoothing over the differences between them the researchers took their distinct experiences as an opportunity to investigate educational inequities as they took shape in various contexts, creating a broad based analysis of discrimination.

Conceptualizing our collaboration as a contact zone both theoretically and methodologically (following Torre, 2003, 2005), involved not only constant attention to differences of perspective and experience, but also an insistence on preserving difference. This was, as the researchers noted in their book chapter, a significant accomplishment (Cahill et al., 2004):

"One of our most significant challenges was how to manage our differences in opinion. What we realized was that not all differences of opinions need to be resolved. Not everyone has to think like you and you don't have to think like everyone. It's okay to disagree and express opposition because it helps others to see things from every angle possible. This was one of our biggest accomplishments, the ability to see the world through someone else's eyes and to let others see the world through ours."

In practical terms what this meant was first of all acknowledging and addressing our different perspectives. It involves explaining one's standpoint (Hardstock, 1983), how one is situated, and what experiences contribute to one's particular perspective 'for me, it's like this,' 'I think this way because of this experience.' It involves interrogating others' perspectives in order to understand difference 'where are you coming from?', talking through difference and clarifying 'is this what you mean?'

We began our collaborative work with a set of 'agreements,' essentially informal guidelines for our collaboration which included being present on time to participate, respecting others' opinions and points of views –which we interpreted to mean actively listening, disagreeing with each other in a way that was constructive or explicative- in

other words clarifying one's own point of view rather than dismissing someone else's- and taking seriously our work together.³ Everyone involved took our 'agreements' seriously. Keeping in mind the critique that participatory work prioritizes consensus, it was crucial to create an environment where everyone's perspectives get aired and are accepted, even if disagreed with. For example, while the researchers could agree that their neighborhood was disinvested, they disagreed about how to deal with this issue personally; some wanted to get out of the community, while others wanted to stay put and improve their neighborhood. Rather than avoiding difference, the researchers kept returning to this faultline, excavating it as they constructed their personal and collective analyses of urban restructuring across multiplicity.

A collective praxis methodological approach

In order for the project to be open, to be inclusive, it was necessary to create a way of working that maximized participation of everyone and was transparent so that it could be guided by the group (see also below section 'building a community of researchers'). The process needs to be based upon exchange. In concrete terms this involved establishing a series of practices, repetitive ways of working that were collaborative and would feed back into the group, facilitate group ownership, and move towards concrete applications of knowledge. I call these practices the "collective praxis approach" in the spirit of Patti Lather's (1986) call for 'research as praxis' designed to advance emancipatory knowledge in 'an unjust world' (cf. Fuller & Kitchin, 2004; Zusman, 2004). The collective praxis approach constituted a key methodological approach of the PAR project. Building upon critical pedagogical approaches that emphasize the relationship between dialogue,

³ The practice of establishing community guidelines or "rules" together is a common practice in collaborative and community work. While we had a set of informal agreements, we did not explicitly write down our rules. This is something I would do differently next time.

critical reflection, and action, the collective praxis approach references Gramsci's (1999) and Freire's (1997) action-oriented approach to knowledge production and social transformation.

A key praxis involved writing and reflecting in our journals (Williams & Kornblum, 1994). This was a way for the researchers to think through on paper an issue or topic such as "what I like in my community," or to reflect upon what we accomplished (or didn't), what worked well during the day or still needed to be addressed. Journal writing served as a private space for reflection, for spending time thinking from one's own perspective, even while crowded in a room with others. Writing is an important generative and productive process where you start to make sense of your feelings and experiences. It is also a constructive space for participants to formulate their perspectives. In this way, writing also served as a preparation for public participation. After writing, we would share excerpts of what we wrote with each other. This might bring closure to the end of the day, be a way to start a group discussion, begin a process of comparison, or jump-start a decision making process. The practice of journal writing established a process of moving from personal to shared experiences. A related practice I instituted was what I call reflective note-taking. As the researchers shared their writings I would take notes on what they were saying on big sheets of paper on "our wall". I would then check in –'is this what you were saying?'⁴ The notes would serve as documentation of our conversation which we could refer back to. For example: 'it seems like everyone likes the fact that the neighborhood is diverse but yesterday some of you expressed some problems with the newer residents. Do you want to talk about that?' Our collective wall

⁴ Sometimes the researchers would take turns doing reflective note-taking, but most often I took this role. In retrospect I think this is something I think I would do differently next time.

was a point of reference and a public memory of shared knowledge production from which we could build new ideas and construct our project together.

Another important practice was setting the agenda. We did this informally at the beginning or end of each day. What did we accomplish so far? What do we want to do next? How much time should we spend on each thing we want to do? Is this realistic? Janderie volunteered to be a timekeeper (as I was having a hard time with this role). Sometimes agenda items would grow out of our morning discussions based on the reflective journal practice. We would also check in periodically on the overall process – “we have only 2 weeks to collect data, do analysis and whatever else we decide to do! Oh my god! How are we going to do this!” This would feed back into the practice of setting the agenda and a backwards planning process: if we want to accomplish *this* we need to do *this* first. We would set priorities together for long and short-term goals.⁵

The collective praxis methodological approach was an established set of rituals which created an open structure for our day and collective ownership over the process. While at first I determined the topics for reflection broadly based on what the group shared (their neighborhood, their gender, their age) after a short time our reflections grew organically out of our discussions or issues researchers would bring to the table. Instead of “purifying knowledge” or “tidying up” people’s messy lives and excluding anything that does not fit into the structured representation of participatory tools (Kothari, 2001), the collective praxis approach is open to definition. The structured process of critical

⁵ While the practice of setting agendas, long and short term goals, was very successful during the summer of 2002, it has been harder to accomplish when we were meet only periodically, and as a result sometimes some of our projects have taken longer to accomplish than anticipated.

reflection, group discussion, and collective determination of the agenda created the conditions for group determination of the project.

There are, however, definite limitations to an approach which puts emphasis upon and involves a substantial amount of writing. Not everyone had the same comfort level with writing, and for some writing was perceived as a barrier to personal expression. Aware of the potential for exclusion, I nevertheless decided that the benefits of personal writing were compelling and outweighed potential drawbacks. My research approach was informed by the scholarship of the writing-to-learn and critical thinking movements in educational practice which argue first, that learning involves an active engagement with problem-solving (Britton, 1970; Bean, 1996; Elbow, 1973; Fulwiler & Young, 1982; Gilyard, 1996). And, second, writing is itself a process of inquiry and is closely linked with thinking; when we struggle with writing we are struggling with thought itself (Bean, 1996, xiii). From a theoretical standpoint, this approach is also in keeping with post structural theory which conceptualizes subjectivity as a process that takes shape through discourse.

Writing itself could be understood as a form of *praxis* as defined by Freire, as a critical space of reflection and action. Within the research process writing could function as a private space to work through personal thoughts before sharing one's perspective with the group. 'Free-writing,' the practice of writing continuously whatever comes to one's mind, is a way of starting to give shape to what psychologist Lev Vygotsky identifies as "inner speech", which mediates between thought and language, "a dynamic, shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought" (1962, 149, cited in Fulwiler, 1983). The process of writing thus offers a transitional space of reflection for developing one's thinking. Toby Fulwiler argues that it is through using "language we come to "represent,

come to know and understand the world" (1983, 276). Writing is an act of discovery, Fulwiler explains, it allows us to make our thoughts visible and concrete and allows us to interact with them (ibid, 277). In a similar vein, Peter Elbow suggests (1973, 15) "meaning is not what you start out with but what you end up with.. Think of writing not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message." In our project, writing was in this sense, a means for processing one's thoughts, for clarifying one's position - 'what do I think about my neighborhood?', for reflecting on a particular subject, and for the interpretation of personal experience. If uncomfortable with writing, as one researcher was in particular, the time for writing became a time for taking notes and reflective thinking, and instead of reading verbatim she would articulate her thoughts extemporaneously.

In fact, the collective praxis approach privileged oral expression. Writing therefore also functioned as a means to prepare for conversation and dialogue. Like writing, talking can be conceived as a way of processing and understanding our thoughts. Britton argues that "human beings use "expressive" speech—or talk—more to shape their own experience than to communicate with others: the words give concrete form to our thinking and so make it more real. This "shaping at the point of utterance" (Britton, 1972, 53) helps us discover the meaning (our own meaning) of our everyday experience" (Fulwiler, 1983, 277). Collective dialogue in this sense functions as a space for both individual and collective inquiry and interpretation. It is a space for making sense of and aligning oneself with particular subject positions.

All of the researchers felt very comfortable with expressing themselves and their thoughts verbally, with the exception of Alice. Alice, who had emigrated from China two years before, felt understandably less confident in English than in her native language.

In fast paced group discussions Alice would at times ask others to explain what she didn't understand or to clarify their perspectives. Her "outside" status forced others to be more precise with their language and define terms (see for example Chapter 6 discussion of nigga vs. nigger). But more often Alice was quiet, actively listening, and not participating verbally. One on one, in individual conversations with me at lunchtime or after hours, Alice would talk through the issues we had discussed as a group. For her, writing became a place where she would express herself and articulate her opinions. In this way, the collective praxis approach served her in that she could read aloud from her writing, which was easier than expressing herself extemporaneously, even if this was also sometimes difficult for her (see below discussion on 'degrees of participation').

Facilitating collective research

The redefinition of research as a collaborative process necessarily changes the role of the academic researcher who may be identified as a facilitator (Hart, 1997), training participants to do research (as described below in 'building a community of researchers'), or a collaborator (Lewin, 1948), who researches alongside participants providing technical assistance. The role of the academic researcher in a PAR is problematized in the literature, particularly in light of critiques from research done in developing countries (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). At the heart of the critique is the challenge of negotiating the underlying power structures within the process (Cooke & Kothari, 2001, Pugh & Potter 2003). A critical concern in this regard is the relations of power between the researchers and participants, and also between the participants themselves (Pain, 2004; Wilton 2004; Pain & Francis, 2003). How do you create a "democratic space of radical inclusivity" (Torre, 2005) despite social inequities along

lines of race, gender, class etc (Fine et al., 2003; Maguire 2000)? Another significant issue is that a participatory process may be more confusing to negotiate because of the collaborative structure of the process (Cooke, 2001; Kothari, 2001). The challenge for everyone involves paying attention how power plays out in the project, addressing it, and making it as transparent as possible within the process. Given these significant considerations, my interpretation of my role as a facilitator and collaborator translated into particular responsibilities for me within the collective research project.

At the outset it was necessary to set up an open structure for participation as articulated in the collective praxis approach. Transparency was my primary concern, given the evident uneven relations of power within the research process. This was especially important with regard to my overlapping roles as facilitator, researcher, and initiator of the project, in addition to the obvious differences in age, race and educational levels between me and the other researchers. My strategy for creating a transparent process involved a conscious and explicit ongoing explication of every step or decision made. In practical terms this meant sharing with the researchers all the nuts and bolts of doing research, the financial issues, my own struggles, and my thought process. When possible all decisions were made collaboratively. For example we discussed how long we should take for lunch, we set the agendas together, and when we received funding of \$1000 we decided together how to use the money and we developed a budget together. In this way I wanted to not only be clear, but also to minimize the unevenness in power relations. The collective praxis approach served to create an open undefined structure which could be shaped by all involved. My role as a facilitator, in this regard was to reflect back, work 'in service' of the collective, and consciously diminish my input in order to create space for the young women to 'take over.'

Aside from the critical responsibility of training the participants to do research (see below), my primary role as a facilitator, as I understood it, was to create 'a safe space for honest dialogue' as one researcher articulated it, in order to create an environment where everyone involved would feel comfortable to express themselves and contribute. At times this involved taking a more active role as a facilitator to engage everyone involved. Sometimes this meant interrupting silences: "Alice what do you think?"; or disrupting dominant voices by creating regular opportunities for group reflection, checking in with the group periodically : "Do we all agree? Why or why not?" (as described above in collective praxis approach). Part of my role involved modeling this as a facilitator in a way that was conscious. As an active listener I worked to validate people's contributions to the group, and to check in and clarify my understanding of what was being said for all of us. This became especially important when we were trying to articulate conceptually complex ideas.

I did not interpret my role as a facilitator to passively guide participation. As a co-collaborator I also was involved in the research process and had opinions about our sometimes heated conversations. Of course sometimes I disagreed with others. At times I decided to silence my perspective so as not to potentially dominate or derail discussion, other times I decided to share my interpretation or challenge another's. When I did disagree, I made sure to first clarify I was speaking from my own experience, "for me, I experienced it like this" so as to break down any claim to authority and to consciously articulate my particular standpoint. I also regularly shared my interpretations with the researchers throughout the process. This served as a informal method of analysis. I would confirm and clarify my understanding with the group: "Is this what you meant?" in order to gain further understanding or to challenge my assumptions.

Building a community of researchers

Tiffany: I never thought of research as a tool to talk back to the community. I always thought of it as analyzing (sometimes over-analyzing) history. Like with researching past events something we would get in school or looking up a lot of information on a certain subject. I also thought of research being used like statistics, making observations about things and only using them for big companies or businesses.

Indra: Even though I've had past experience with research, it's still been hard for me to grasp the concept that research can be a tool for changing society, never mind being able to embrace it as a powerful tool for women of color in particular. For a number of reasons, namely the fact that education alone is connoted with negative feelings and failure for communities of color, research is not understood fully and used to its full merit by communities of color. Because of this relationship or rather lacking relationship with education and research, I think we didn't understand the potential impact of our work at first.
(Cahill et al., 2004)

Linda Alcoff (1995) and Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) raise a critical problem of academic research being a conversation of 'us' with 'us' about 'them,' reflecting the racial hierarchies and class privileges of society (Kelley, 1998). PAR shifts the terms of engagement in its emphasis upon knowledge produced in collaboration; those "studied" are repositioned as subjects instead of objects of research (Freire, 1997; Torre & Fine, 2004), and are involved in defining the research project. A PAR research process is a practice of researching *with*, rather than *on* participants (Lykes, 2001). The building of a community of researchers is critical to the success of a PAR process (Torre et al, 2001). It entails on the one hand, taking seriously the processes of collaboration and community-building (as described above), and, it also involves the development of research proficiency on the part of all participants. The development of skills is significant not only because it serves to challenge the power dynamics of the relationship between the facilitator and participants (and between participants with

varying levels of experience with research), but also because it is itself an “emancipatory” and personally transformative (Hart, 1997; Lather, 1986).

In keeping with the theoretical premises of PAR, I developed an integrative youth-centered approach to training the participants/researchers in research skills which started with the knowledge and experience of the young women involved. The young women researchers ‘learned through doing,’ developing research skills along the way, as they learned how to do research in an applied way through their own inquiry process. Drawing upon critical constructivist approaches to learning, inspired by the work of John Dewey (1984) and Lev Vygotsky (1978), my methodological approach emphasizes the active social construction of knowledge, as a part of reflective practice.

While at the beginning the participants were introduced to the broad outlines of the research process: problem identification, research design, data collection, analysis, action, it was not clear what this meant exactly as there were so many different directions we could go, as the project was still at this point undefined. While the researchers had varying levels of education and different experiences with ‘formal’ research, I began with the assumption that everyone engaged in research as part of their everyday lives. We talked about our different experiences doing research, what we liked about it, and what was confusing.

Critical to our process of doing research was an interrogation of its purpose: Is it necessary? What do we get out of it? In asking ‘who does it serve?’ we quickly moved to a related question ‘can we benefit from research?’ This in turn engaged another level of analysis ‘who are the audiences of our research?’ and ‘how might this research impact our community?’ At the heart of our process was an explicit consideration of the

purposes and audiences of research. With this in mind, we began our work together with a commitment to do something personally meaningful. This soon became a mission to do something that would serve “our community,” even if how we defined “our community” was an ongoing issue the young women struggled with throughout the process. But in deciding to create a research agenda that was based on their own concerns and “of use” to themselves and their community, the young women engaged a critique of research that seemed irrelevant, abstract, or worse, in conflict with their needs (see further discussion below in “speaking back”).

Our process: critical investigation of personal everyday lives

Below each stage of the research process is described keeping in mind that while the process of doing research sounds linear and even straightforward in fact it is neither. PAR is an ongoing cyclical practice in which each ‘step’ of the process is revisited, as an opportunity to reflect and take action.

The PAR process followed a feminist Freirian model⁶ which started with the concerns and questions of young women and their critical investigation of their social and environmental contexts (Freire, 1997; hooks, 1994). The late great Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire (1974) proposed a radical reassessment of education as the “practice of freedom.” Education according to Freire, is the “practice *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in their incessant struggle to regain their humanity” (Freire, 1997, 30). The “practice of freedom” is conceived as an ongoing process of dialogue and critical reflection towards the goal of conscientizacao, the awakening of

⁶ While embracing Freire’s work, hooks (1994, 49) also offers a critique of the sexism of Freire’s language and of his patriarchal model of liberation which equates liberation with manhood.

critical consciousness. It starts with a reflection upon the conditions of one's own life and the critical realization of 'the roots of one's oppression' and moves towards self, and then social, transformation.

The young women spent the first week engaged in a process of personal investigation, exploring what they shared - their neighborhood and what it meant to be a young women growing up in the neighborhood. We used multiple methods, some inspired by the creative user-friendly visual and oral methods used for instance in participatory community development programs in 'developing' countries and in environmental research with children (Driskell, 2002; Chawla, 2002; Hart, 1997; see also PLA Notes www.iied.org/sarl/pla_notes/index.html). We discussed how our own bodies could be understood as research instruments, highly sensitive gages of experience. While using each method we talked about its application and the kind of information it provided. We made mental maps of the neighborhood and practiced behavior mapping. The researchers developed a guided tour of places significant in the Lower East Side neighborhood and we spent a day doing "field research," taking field notes, photographing and or sketching different places of interest. The researchers kept geographical diaries of their everyday activities for three days noting where they were and how they were feeling as they engaged in different activities throughout their day. The researchers identified the different roles they played in their lives, creating a social map of roles identifying the responsibilities associated with the expectations in their everyday lives. They also created a self-identification map locating themselves and their heritage. In addition, we regularly engaged in critical reflective journal writing exercises on related topics such as a special place that makes you feel good; what I like about my neighborhood; what am I concerned about in my neighborhood?; what needs to be improved in my community? what are the opportunities for young women who live in the

city today? What are the challenges for young women in my community? What are the rules to my neighborhood? What is my ideal day? And then we would spend hours talking and reflecting upon each of these activities: what do we share? What is different about our experiences? Why? Each of the methods in turn provided an opportunity for reflection and discussion, and as a facilitator I would take reflective notes on our wall which we would review collaboratively, reflecting upon what we shared.

Doing research on one's own life was personally revelatory and exciting. To carefully examine one's own everyday patterns, to take stock in one's experiential knowledge base, and to see one's familiar environment with new eyes can be thrilling. Sometimes it was a little disturbing. "Oh my god can you believe that I spent 10 hours watching TV! and you know what, everytime I was watching TV I was bored, sleepy, or depressed." "Wow I had no idea how much I knew about my neighborhood. I know every nook and cranny on my block, everyone in my building." "I noticed I stay only within certain boundaries in my neighborhood and I feel very uncomfortable out of this area;" "I realize I am afraid of homeless people. They are part of my neighborhood and yet I would do anything I could to avoid them. Why is that? I feel bad about that." "I don't like it here. I want to live somewhere else with trees, with no garbage." The researchers expressed a lot of interest in others' experiences, comparing one another's perspectives. "Wow you know so much about your neighborhood. It's really impressive." "You never went here before? Really?" In fact one of their findings was that although they live within the same neighborhood boundaries as defined by the community district (appendix 2), the researchers lived in very different worlds and defined their own neighborhood differently. Annissa explains:

We are probably one of the most diverse groups of people I've ever spent an extended amount of time with, and when I say diverse I'm talking about more than cultural diversity but diversity of personality and opinion. Janderie has stated on more than one occasion that if it hadn't been for the project she never would have spent any amount of time with us, not because she doesn't like us but because we never would have met due to the different ways we live despite that fact that we're from the same small community.

Nevertheless the researchers identified what they called "common ground", shared experiences.

Doing research on one's own life is complicated. It is intimate. It is difficult to treat personal experiences as "data," which implies a remove or distance, especially when these experiences are tied to emotions. It was sometimes challenging for the researchers to step back and adopt an analytic perspective, especially if the experiences were upsetting. Often we would find ourselves empathizing with each other, engaging with our emotional selves before we would or could retreat to an analytic posture. Our "data" included how we felt, our interpretations of experiences, in all of its qualitative thickness.

Through the process of investigating their own everyday lives and then sharing these experiences, the young women began the process of social theorizing where they came to understand their individual experiences as shared and as social. At the same time we paid attention to the differences, noting what was distinct about our experiences. There was not an assumed consensus of experience because everyone involved was so different from one another; in fact, quite the opposite, the researchers repeatedly emphasized their perceived differences. "We are SO different!" or "I never would have met you if it wasn't for this project." So here stuck in the same room the researchers got to know each other and develop relationships with each other through the process of

doing research on their lives. What was surprising to the researchers was what they did share, even across difference.

Problem identification

The information that we had gathered individually was treated as “data” which we then analyzed as a group with an eye towards identifying shared research concerns. As a first level of data analysis we created lists on our wall of research findings. These lists were of the opportunities, constraints, and contradictions, and “common ground”—what the researchers shared. We looked across our “data” and looked for connections and contradictions, between say “neighborhood pride” and “nothing to do in my neighborhood.” We spent time critically reflecting and writing about our concerns and about possible connections between issues. We were involved in problem identification. Many issues were raised as possible topics to investigate, but what the group mobilized around, and what they decided to focus their project on, was the upsetting discovery of misrepresentations of young women of color.

In fact the “problem” of misrepresentations of young women of color had not been directly identified in the researchers’ lists, although it had been implicitly inferred in some of the researchers’ writings, or pointed to indirectly. However, in the course of doing research on their neighborhood, the research team read a report produced for a local non-profit organization,⁷ which inspired their research focus. The report features a hypothetical profile of a young working class woman of color living on the Lower East Side; let’s call her Taniesha. The report goes into detail about the particular challenges

⁷ Names of the organization, report and authors are not identified in order to protect their anonymity.

Taniesha might face growing up in her neighborhood and how this particular organization will protect Taniesha from harm. Instead of the 'worst case scenario' described in the report--a bleak future for a high school drop out, a single mother with no job prospects and poor health who places a burden on society, the organization promises to deliver a productive member of society. What was particularly striking and offensive about the profile of Taniesha was that she was a composite of all stereotypes rolled into one body: she shoplifted, cut school, dropped out of school; her mom was on welfare; her clothes were too-sexy, she hung out on the street; bored at home she sought out the attention of boys; she had sex without protection; she got HIV; she got pregnant; and she went on welfare, just like her mother. As one of the researchers put it: "They are saying basically that we are all these things unless we had their help-- their good will to save us." This all-too-common fundraising ploy and programming strategy of certain non-profit organizations depends upon well-rehearsed "culture of poverty" arguments, emphasizing the deficits of young women whom they construct as "at risk" (see chapter 3) to justify their existence to funders (Rios-Moore et al, 2004). The young women were not an intended audience. The report was written by 'us' for 'us' about 'them' not for 'them' (Alcoff, 1995; Minh-ha, 1989). Young poor and working class women of color were not even imagined as a potential interlocutor for the report. Although the report was found on an organization's website, easily accessible to anyone who took the time to look, it is highly unusual that this sort of text falls into others' hands, especially those 'others' who were its focus. But what happens when it does?

The researchers were enraged by the report; perhaps not shocked, but deeply angry. What was especially difficult to digest was that this report was associated with a youth service organization that was supposed to be on "their side," working on their behalf. While the young women were familiar with negotiating stereotypes as part of their

everyday lives, the discovery of the misrepresentations in academic and social research was surprising and caught them off guard. As Robin D.G. Kelley explains “when I entered college and began reading the newspaper, monographs, and textbooks on a regular basis, I realized that many academics, journalists, policymakers, and politicians had taken the “dozens” to another level. In all my years of playing the dozens, I have rarely heard vitriol as vicious as the words spouted by Riverside county welfare director Lawrence Townsend: “Everytime I see a bag lady on the street, I wonder, ‘was that an A.F.D.C. mother who hit the menopause wall—who can no longer reproduce and get money to support herself?’ ” (Kelley, 1997, 2). Here emotion served to galvanize the group : emotional motivation = problem identification. The research team tapped into their collective anger as a way to move forward, in a way that bell hooks would characterize as “the political process of decolonization” as “a way for us to learn to see clearly... and gather that rage and use it towards constructive social change”(hooks, 1995, 18). Awakening the critical consciousness is what Paulo Freire calls conscientização, the struggle for humanization. A consideration of the emotional engagement in doing research and of what it *feels* like to do research and to be intimately involved, represents a feminist, post-positivist flipside to the distanced mantle of the scientific method (Bhavani, K.K., 1994; Tulwani-Smith, 1999). Freire addresses the labor of conscientização, the pain of “coming to terms with the roots of your oppression as you come into your subjecthood.” It hurts, as Freire remarks “liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one” (Freire, 1970, 31). It is this pain, this rage, that is so essential, hooks reminds us (1995), to confront and move beyond the pain towards what she describes as self-recovery and clarity. In her discussion of black rage, she suggests that in order for black folks to claim subjectivity “we need to claim our rage” (hooks, 1995, 16). But in order for rage not to consume us it must be engaged and used constructively; and it is this engagement that leads towards social transformation (hooks,

1995). Or, as Freire would put it, it is through the praxis of the struggle -- through reflection and action upon the world that we are able to transform it.

This process is neither smooth nor easy. As researcher Indra Rios-Moore eloquently articulates:

“By the end of our time together during the summer we came to the agreement that we wanted to provoke others into rethinking the standard negative stereotypes of young urban women of color that they encountered. But before we could even realize that that was what we wanted to do we had to (through angry eruptions, upset, and discussions) realize that we were living under the veil of those stereotypes ourselves. We had to touch upon some of those emotions that those oppressively heavy misconceptions had laid on us, and that was a difficult and sometimes painful process” (Cahill et al., 2004).

Focusing on the subject of stereotypes for their research project engaged what psychologists identify as cognitive dissonance, essentially forcing the young women to confront contradictory interpretations of their experience as a way of clarifying their own perspectives and challenging the status quo.

The research team decided to focus their research project as a way to speak back, as a response to the misguided authors of the report and others who misunderstand and misrepresent young women of color. To this end, the Fed Up Honeys were involved in an important historical project spearheaded by scholars of color and feminists who have used research as a means for critiquing the dominant perspective based on their own situated experiences of racism, sexism, and structural poverty. Research in this regard is not value free and disinterested, but instead is socially engaged and used to counter and disrupt hegemonic discourses, blurring the boundaries between scholarship and social activism (Bell, 2001; Ladner, 1973; Maguire, 2001; Kelley, 1997; Jackson, 2004 ; Harris et al, 2001).

Reading the report was a pivotal moment for the development of their collective critical consciousness and also a turning point in their project. Next, the researchers needed to figure out the particular questions they wanted to ask and answer, and why. The challenge was how to turn their own consciousness raising, their passion and anger, into a viable research project. This was difficult. We spent time writing critical reflections and sharing our perspectives aloud, and explaining complicated ideas, as witnessed in the opening excerpt of conversation that started the chapter. We developed a list of many possible lines of inquiry under the broad heading of “stereotypes,” and identified corresponding research questions. It was a very inclusive process in that everyone’s questions were taken seriously; instead of deciding as a group to focus on one of the proposed research questions and eliminating other questions we mapped out connections between our interests in order to find ways to combine our questions and maintain our distinct contributions. The researchers developed, after days of refining, expanding, and discussing, two distinct but related lines of inquiry which included a series of sub-questions as follows⁸:

1. How do stereotypes inform the way you explain/characterize/understand yourself and others? How does this then negatively affect the community?
 - a) what are the stereotypes of young urban women of color?
 - b) what do the stereotypes leave out?
 - c) how do young women relate to or resist stereotypes about them?
 - d) how do young women use stereotypes?
 - e) What kinds of negative effects on people and the community do these stereotypes have?
2. What is the relationship between the lack of resources (for example, education) and the stereotypes of young urban women of color? In what ways does stereotyping affect young women’s well-being?
 - a) what are the resources that our community lacks?
 - b) What are the real effects of the lack of resources on young women’s lives?

⁸ The questions were to shift and be refined periodically over the course of our research.

Their project title MAKES ME MAD: Stereotypes of young urban womyn of color conveys their fury. At the same time the researchers were careful not to seem too angry; they didn't want to alienate anyone or be perceived as feminists, which is why they adopted the name "Fed-Up Honeys" a softer appellation that underscores their frustration.

A collaborative autoethnography

The researchers developed what might be called a collaborative 'autoethnography,' as defined by Mary Louise Pratt, in which they re-present "themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms," as opposed to an ethnography where the dominant group "represents to themselves their (usually subjugated) others" (Pratt, 1992, 7; see also Butz & Besio, 2004; Ellis & Bocher, 2001; Moss, 2001; Spry, 2001). This was a theoretical, practical, and methodological decision.

Their project focus-- Makes Me Mad--reflects the desire of young women to self-define and have control over their identifications. In keeping with the emphasis in PAR upon self-representation, the project is at once "a critique from below" and a conscious shifting of the terms of engagement intent on making visible the processes of erasure that represent young women in dominant discourse (Fine et al, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Grounding their project in the concrete details of their everyday lives at the neighborhood scale, the researchers proposed an analysis that engages issues of power and self-representation. The Makes Me Mad project was a response, it was conceived of as a strategic intervention into the ways in which outsiders perceive them and it does "force a dialogue in which many (westerners) would not willingly engage" (Pratt,

1999,47). It is about the struggle for self-determination and control over the terms and conditions of material local/global practices (Pratt, 1999; Butz & Besio, 2004).

“This project is about us.” Again and again, the researchers kept returning to the obvious, that their own life stories could serve as evidence challenging reductive stereotypes. After developing the research focus, we realized that we had already collected a lot of information relevant to the study. The decision to use this data—the researchers’ journal writings, all of the materials they had already gathered as part of their personal investigation-- became a practical and methodological decision. This made sense given the constraints of the project, which included time constraints (at that point we thought we only had 2 more weeks of a 4 week project!) and IRB constraints (which would have made it impossible to do research with anyone else who had not signed a consent form).⁹ Relevant data we already collected included the researchers’ self-descriptions, journal writings, the social map of identifications, and mental maps of the neighborhood. In addition, the researchers wrote responses to each of the sub-research questions. The primary data sources for the project were themselves. Secondary sources included meeting with researchers from the CUNY Graduate Center, including Neil Smith and Yasser Payne; archival research, including the Community Board District Needs Statement, books about the neighborhood, and internet research.

Methodologically, the Makes Me Mad project uses what Fallis and Opatow (2003) have described as a “layered” collaborative qualitative research approach; a cyclical research process in which each turn of the process pushed the researchers to ask new questions, to re-think their interpretations, and to engage the differences between their diverse

⁹ Most likely the researchers would have taken another approach otherwise, potential ideas included interviewing other young women or conducting a focus group.

perspectives (Ibid, 107). There are many “layers” in this project, too many perhaps to even take into account. The most prominent “layers” involved the development of research questions, ongoing individual reflective writing and collaborative sharing, regular focused discussions between the researchers, informal conversations with peers and research colleagues about research findings, the analysis of their own writings, archival research, the development and refinement of research products, the presentation of their work, and the ongoing discussion and reflection upon interpretations. This cyclical process did not move in only one direction, but moved back and forth between steps, spiraling out for a wide-angle view on the data and then zooming up close to an analysis of their own writings.

Some parts of the research process were more engaging than others. Discussing together the persuasive and dangerous characterizations they face in their everyday lives but don't often have the space to speak seriously about was sometimes cathartic or even 'therapeutic' as one researcher put it. It was powerful for the researchers to move from personal to shared experiences and to engage in social theorizing together, building theory from the ground up. Sharing their research findings with other young women, peers, and research colleagues was an exciting experience for the researchers who felt powerful when raising the taboo subject of stereotyping with others, speaking back to these mischaracterizations and, in so doing, raising the consciousness of others. Presenting their work served to validate the significance of their research project.

At other times the research was also really difficult. The Makes Me Mad project started with anger and was pushed forward with emotion. The conscientização process discussed above could be understood as a climax, a turning point in the project, such as reading the report that inspired their identification of research concerns. But this

misrepresents the ways in which conscientização is an iterative process, a series of turns that spin you around again and again, dizzy. It's hard to get your balance. In the Makes Me Mad project, conscientização is not a critical awakening after a long sleep, but an ongoing process of consciousness-raising, connecting the dots, and then retracing the lines, coloring in the outline, at each turn or layer in the process.

Data analysis

In a PAR project data analysis is grounded within the research process. It was an ongoing part of the cyclical research approach, even if it was not formal or even identified as 'we're doing data analysis now.' Data analysis was the regular practice of comparing our experiences and findings as part of our reflective process.

Analysis operated on multiple levels or "layers." Feeding back into our project as part of a looped process of critical reflection, analysis was an integrated methodological practice as described above (Sabo, 1999). It was through the practice of critical writing, reflection, and discussion that the researchers realized that they sometimes also used stereotypes, applying them to themselves and others. This finding complicated the way in which the researchers conceptualized their project and it fed back into their development of research questions, requiring further analysis. Instead of just considering the ways outsiders (defined variously as white people, people from outside their community, and others more generally) stereotyped young women of color, they also turned their gaze inwards. This necessitated another level of analysis of the different ways they adopted stereotypes and how and why they did this, and in turn then fed into the development of research products and conceptualization of intended audiences.

Similar to the “listening guide,” developed by feminist psychologists who read through transcripts for different voices (Brown et al, 1988; Way, 1998), in a collaborative data analysis process researchers engage in a process of comparing perspectives, actively listening, contributing, and explicitly taking into account the subtle differences between points of view (Bhavnani, 1999). The researchers developed and extended grounded theory organically from within (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) as they identified shared interpretations and made sense of the similarities and differences in perspectives as part of the research process, rather than after the fact.

The researchers did, however, also engage in a variation on established content analysis procedures (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) in order to be able to write a report of their findings. This process was especially complex because the researchers were analyzing what they themselves had written throughout the project. This more formal procedure of data analysis involved reading through the writings again and again for themes, coding individually their collective writing, discussing the codes as a group, and then re-coding collaboratively and paying attention to our differences and the contradictions within our writings. It was quite intense to read through one another's writings while sitting next to each other and to consider how various group members' writings betrayed the ways in which these stereotypes had become accommodated and even accepted:

Annis: I think it's just to think about what you've already written.

Ruby: It's like to over –analyze.

Annis: I think I like to speak and put things out there and not have to think about why I said them... It's also depressing.

CC: Yes. It's not happy shit. It's like, 'this is why the neighborhood sucks. And this is why my life sucks because my neighborhood sucks'.

Annissa: And this- the stereotype-which kind of proves that we suck. This is how I live the stereotypes.

The content data analysis process was also difficult because it was confusing. While everyone was trained and understood the mechanics of the coding process, the process felt somewhat convoluted and insular because it involved a sort of psychoanalysis of oneself and others (there is, I am sure different and better ways to do this). The limitations of our analysis quickly became obvious. Soon enough we realized that our analysis only captured what we were thinking and writing at a particular moment in time, and of course we were always changing and shifting our perspectives. For example, at the beginning of our research Carmen blamed the poor quality of her school on other students, on “how people bring up their children and how people act. That has nothing to do with the school,” she went on to explain that if her school was in the suburbs it would be better. Later in the project, however, not only did she acknowledge the problems endemic to her school, she also ended up leaving the school altogether. It seemed somewhat problematic to ignore the ways all of us shifted our perspectives over time. And yet how do we account for both perspectives? Our data analysis process reaffirmed our complexity, the ways in which we both accept and reject stereotypes, day in and day out. While this was, on the one hand, another finding, it was on the other, something we already knew. We wondered aloud: Did we really need to do this systematic analysis to prove it? Why? Who did it serve? It felt like a hoop we needed to leap through to prove we were doing research, and the hoop, like the ones the lions jump through at the circus, was on fire.

After already having gone through the conscientização process of problem identification, an emotionally treacherous process, to analyze their own writings involved knowingly re-visiting this process, and this time with a fine tooth comb. In this sense, data analysis can be understood as an engagement of conscientização, but perhaps in a more Foucauldian sense, because this time the researchers are looking at the ways in which hegemonic logic has found its way into the everyday ways we make sense of ourselves, into our language and our interpretations at a micro-level. Data analysis involved in sorting through distorted characterizations, and untangling the violence of these stereotypes on their lives.

Speaking back

In a highly patriarchal society where even white womyn still face a great deal of the same limitations and misconceptions that their grandmothers once faced, womyn of color are all the more in need of the space and the encouragement to start shaping their paths within society. Part of the journey starts with womyn of color smashing the skewed pictures of themselves that they see being constantly portrayed and reified in the world that they live in. Participatory action research is one such method of making sure that we as womyn of color could control how our voices and our thoughts would be portrayed and interpreted through the lens of research. We crafted a project that made our voices the centerpiece and were able to develop new and innovative approaches to research that are more likely to catch the attention of our peers and urge them to re-think their own self-perceptions and those of their communities. (Fed Up Honeys) (Cahill et al, 2004)

Speaking back. The act of sharing the research findings was undoubtedly the researchers' favorite part. It is a moment of catharsis -- a release --filled with pride and energy, an exhale, and a critical part of a participatory action research project. Action.

Action research is inspired by the longstanding traditions of community organizing for social change and justice in impoverished and communities of color, almost always led by women struggling for a better life (Kelley, 2002; Muñiz, 1998; Breitbart & Pader, 1995; Leavitt & Saegert, 1990). The Fed Up Honeys follow in a long line of courageous and

creative women on the Lower East Side who were involved in social change projects from organizing rent strikes, to the ongoing interventions against social structural inequalities led by organizations such as University Settlement or Henry Street Settlement, the Puerto Rican Mothers' Association, or the Mobilization for Youth project and its storefront "Casa de la Comunidad" (Mele, 2000). The Fed Up Honey's "ethic of care" (see chapter 4) was inspired by women's active and often unacknowledged role in caring for and transforming their neighborhood environment, from the establishment and care of the community gardens, to the less visible ongoing provision of child and eldercare (Sharff, 1998).

Within the academy, the Fed Up Honeys follow in the footsteps of scholars of color and feminists who "have paved our way to be here" as Ruby stated, and who have taken seriously the commitment to challenge the dominant social science research paradigm. Ella E. Bell argues (2001, 50) : "Research was a tool to dismantle the master's house, and to achieve social justice." For example, John P. Jackson (2004) shares the story of African American psychologist Horace Mann Bond who used the "master's tools" as early as the 1920s in his critique of racist interpretations of educational IQ tests, which purported biological differences in intelligence between blacks and whites. Using the same methods, he analyzed intelligence test data from the white Southern population and found that a few states with supposedly the most 'pure' racial stock had scores reflecting the mental age of a 12 ½ year old child, way below the national average. Using parody, Bond pointed to the contradictions and misuse of the research. In so doing, he used research as a way to "speak back," undercutting and destabilizing the ground upon which structural inequalities are based. This is an illustration of how research can be used "to speak truth to power" or at least threaten power by poking holes in the hegemonic discourse. As feminist Liz Stanley states: "Succinctly, the point is to change

the world, not only to study it" (Stanley, 1990, 15 cited in Maguire, 2001, 60; Marx, 1859).

The action research approach is rooted in a history of progressive researchers who engage issues of race, gender, and class inequalities and use knowledge production as a means for disrupting the status quo and even transforming public understanding. For example, Ella Bell explains: "The tenets of the Black liberation research approach are 1. to move beyond traditional methods, by 2. creating knowledge for the sake of economic, political, and social change in the Black community and 3. without foresaking rigorous investigation...It was also to be used as a building block in the creation of Black social institutions" (Bell, 2001, 51; Ladner, 1973). To this end, participatory research can be used by communities as a means for strengthening action and organizing as it was in the Civil Rights movement's collaboration with the Highlander Research and Education Center, TN which established citizenship schools throughout the southern United States to multiply the efforts of this important work (Lewis, 2001; www.highlandercenter.org/a-history.asp retrieved January 28, 2005).

Action research has its academic origins in the work of feminist sociologist Jane Addams who, as early as 1895 was involved with other researchers from the University of Chicago in community based research directed at social and political action. By the early 20th century however the University moved to get research out of the community and back into the academy in the name of "scientific" approaches and "objectivity" (Sabo, 2003a). Psychologist Kurt Lewin first coined the term "action research" in the 1940s to describe community based participatory research (ibid). Challenging the division between theory, research and action, Lewin called for the integration of science and practice insisting "no action without research, no research without action" (Fine et al.,

2003; Lewin, 1946). Although today participatory and action-oriented research approaches are gaining prominence within social research for a variety of reasons, there is little discussion of the significance of “action” in PAR, and what is left behind (but see Fine et al., 2003; Fine & Barreras, 2001).

Action was not an afterthought in the Makes Me Mad project. Addressing the audiences and purposes of doing research was an ongoing conversation throughout the research process. Who do we want to speak to? Who is the intended audience of “our message”? How can we effectively reach out to our audiences? The “message” was multivalent. The researchers were aware that their research would be received by very different audiences, some of whom would be sympathetic to their perspective and others who might be hostile to their concerns (Jackson, 2004). To this end, they developed various ways of “speaking back” with their research including a sticker campaign, a website, a research report, conference presentations, and educational workshops around stereotyping. Their research products reflect what Jackson identifies as rhetorical strategies used in African American discourse “to gain voice in a culture that would render them voiceless” (Jackson, 2004, 262), engaging “double consciousness,” “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (DuBois, 1989, 3). In creating multiple research products the young women attempt to communicate to both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ through a multi-pronged initiative to connect to different audiences (to academics/to young people/ to policy-makers, to educators, etc.). Not only do the research products deploy various rhetorical and design strategies, they are also a way of addressing the thickness of research whose data are stratified like layers of fine pastry. The different research products (the website, stickers, report, etc.) share different findings of the research process itself (Cahill, 2004; M. Torre, personal communication, March 22, 2003).

While early on in the research the discussion centered around speaking back to problematic academic research, policy, and misguided outsiders, it quickly became clear that the researchers prioritized one audience in particular: young women of color like them. As one researcher put it: “others are invited to listen in:”

“Presumably, the main audience for our research would be people outside of our community because it would be simple to assume that these are the people that are misunderstanding us and are the main consumers of stereotypes of young urban womyn of color. But over the course of our discussions we came to the very difficult realization that we too were consumers of these negative stereotypes, so we decided that our primary audience should be our peers. If we only communicated with outsiders that presumes that our peers (and ourselves) don’t have the level of agency needed to make change to the predominant perceptions of us and we strongly disagree with that belief” (Rios-Moore et al., 2004, 3).

While young women of color were designated as the “primary audience,” the researchers still wanted to reach out to other audiences, such as foundations, policy makers, and youth service organizations etc. But in identifying their peers—other young women of color—as the most important audience, the researchers made a decision that had implications not only for the message they wanted to get across but also for the presentation of their research findings.

In order to get their message across to other young women of color in their community the researchers were challenged to develop research “products” that would be engaging and eye-catching to this particular audience. With this in mind, we reviewed various research and artistic presentations such as public art murals, sticker campaigns, maps, newsletters, websites, journal articles, and books. We discussed the presentation of information, the audience and whether it was effective, always considering why or why not. The researchers were especially inspired by artistic products that provoked or

surprised them and made them think or laugh. Of course, it helped that they, as young women of color themselves, had a special insight into this audience. If they thought it was cool, if they liked it, it would most probably be received well by other young women of color. While this was an issue of design, it was also an issue of accessibility in terms of both language use and graphic sensibility. For example, Carmen argued that one of the stereotypes the researchers had identified for their sticker project—‘promiscuous’-- was not a commonly used word:

Carmen: When you use ‘Ho’ people get mad. But if you say promiscuous they be, like, ‘shut up!’ ‘Cause they don’t know what that is.

Laughter.

Carmen: I’m serious. They be, like, ‘shut up man!’ They don’t know what the hell that is. So you can use it.

Laughter.

Carmen: I swear, I relayed that to everyone in my building and they don’t know what that is. For real. I’m going to say that to somebody. I’ll be, like, ‘you promiscuous.’ They’ll probably think that’s a good word and shit, and they be, like, ‘thank you’.

Laughter.

Nevertheless the researchers decided to use this stereotype because they decided it was a word that was familiar enough that it would intrigue their primary audience to find out what it meant. In short, the researchers decided to use the word promiscuous because others should know this word since its being used to describe them. Identifying accessibility as a standard of good research, in the end, the researchers rejected the idea of creating different products for different audiences. Jasmine explains:

One of the main questions that we considered was whether or not we were willing to “dumb down” our work or simplify it for easier digestion. If we were going to do that, what that would say about what we thought of our audience

(other young women)? Most of us were in agreement that we felt that simplifying the work would either be insulting to our audience and/or would defy the point of us wanting to challenge the people that came in contact with our research products.

They didn't want to "dumb down" their research as Jasmine put it, or use a more sophisticated language to appeal to a different audience. But at the same time, the research team developed various research products to engage audiences in different ways. After reading the report which first inspired their research focus, the researchers decided they wanted to "speak back" and also write a report refuting the stereotypes about young women (appendix 3). The young women were quite upset that the youth service organization's report that had fueled their research was accessible to anyone on the internet, and so they decided to create a website in order to engage a wider audience and to showcase their report. But because they know many people in their community might not go on the internet, the researchers also decided to create a 'user-friendly' print version of their report that they planned to distribute in their neighborhood (cf. Rios-Moore, 2004).

The first product the researchers developed is also the most provocative: the "Stereotype Stickers" (appendix 3, see last page of report). Each sticker includes the website address (www.fed-up-honeys.org) and features a stereotype about young urban women of color based on their research. The stereotypes selected include : "Likely to become teen moms", "In abusive relationships", "Promiscuous"; "Uneducated"; "Lazy and on welfare" and "Burden to society." Here's how researcher Erica Arenas describes the stickers:

"Most advertisements seen on public transportation and around the city are discriminatory and sexist, so what we created is something mocking those ads but instead of selling you sex, we're making you think. Those of you who have

spotted them must be wondering exactly what our motive is with these "Stereotype Stickers". That's simple. We are looking to plant a seed in the minds of society. We wanted our stickers to upset you to the point of inspiration. We want our beautiful, young, urban womyn of color to realize what it is we have against us and we hope it will give you all the motivation to go against the grain; to prove everyone wrong "(www.fed-up-honeys.org, 2004)

In effect the research team sought to reproduce their own consciousness-raising in their sticker campaign: to make people mad; "to realize what it is we have against us;" and to upset their audience as a way of motivating them- "to go against the grain, to prove everyone wrong." Designed to look like a Gap advertisement, with clean simple lines, a figure against a white background, the hope is to engage an unsuspecting passerby. Although intended explicitly for a target audience, other young women of color, and designed accordingly, the stickers were to be posted in public spaces throughout their community and the goal was to reach out and provoke the public at large. In the stereotypes stickers, the researchers in effect adopt and play with the stereotypes as Jackson suggests (2004, 263) "as a way to rob the discourse of its power. ...undermining and destabilizing racist stereotypes" by posting them everywhere and confronting the public with an "in your face" strategy.

The website, www.fed-up-honeys.org is a showcase for multiple facets of the research team's work. It features selected writings by the researchers and images from the community and of the researchers. It includes a page introducing the research team; a page explaining the stereotype stickers; a page of resources on the Lower East Side including links to community organizations and businesses that connect to their interests; a page of resources for young women (links to other websites with information about health, sexuality, financial resources); a "rant" page where people can post their frustration, where the young women and website visitors can vent; a poetry page for personal creative expression around issues of relevance to young people of color; a

page with their report “Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of Young Urban Womyn of Color; and a page thanking all those who have helped us throughout the project. Scrolling across the top of the homepage of the website is the announcement, “created by young women of color for young women of color.” This is reflected not only in the content of the website, but also in the design choices which include the use of contemporary fonts, a color scheme of purple and blue against a black background, scrolling quotes, and an animated honey bee. The website aesthetics are contemporary, cool, youthful, and engaging. The website was designed to be interacted with, always growing, and reflective of the producers and the audiences who visit it.

The research team also wrote a report Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of young urban womyn of color (Rios-Moore et al., 2004; appendix 3) based on their research process and findings. The report discusses the ways in which young women internalize stereotypes and connections between the lack of resources in their community such as education, health, and housing resources and stereotypes of young women. The report also contains a list of “community building needs” that the researchers developed based on their research. It was a challenge to create a report that was user-friendly and accessible. Staying true to some of the conventions of social science reports, we designed it to look like a newsletter that was at the same time attractive and accessible. The aesthetics of the research report mimics the website, using the same graphic sensibility, filled with pictures and thought bubbles with questions for the readers. Featured on the back of the report are copies of the stereotype stickers. While the report engages the language of social science, reporting the research questions, methods, and findings, it subverts it in its design and accessibility. The authors use a friendly personal voice, “we” instead of a neutral invisible third person. Although the report plays with the format, it is also geared for researchers and policy-makers and

even addresses them explicitly: "We realized that we, as the target audience for preventive and "at-risk" programming, could give a unique perspective on what we feel are our needs." The research report is currently being sent out to local community service agencies, distributed in communities and schools, and sent to policy makers.

Self-representation is one of the most critical contributions of a PAR process. The *Makes Me Mad* project is an example of how young working class women of color choose to self-identify and speak back to reductive mischaracterizations. But if writing is a method of inquiry, as Richardson argues, not only a mode of 'telling,' but also a way of "knowing" (1994, 516) how we choose to write and represent will necessarily reveal different aspects of ourselves and our "message." In this regard, writing as a diverse collaborative poses its own challenges. How do we articulate the multiple positionalities, contradictions, and ambiguities across a group of very different people? In writing their report the researchers chose to write in a singular voice, a royal "we" in which they consolidated their differences and articulated a particular standpoint. Critics might ask if a singular voice of consensus erases the differences within. Without a doubt. Admittedly, the research team was what Fine et al. (2003) might call a semi-fictional community of women scholars. We didn't know each other a month before, but from this shared situated perspective the authors tried to articulate the complexity of this standpoint by using quotes from each other so readers might get a sense of multiple voices. Adopting a singular "we" is a political stance placing emphasis upon the collective over the individual.

The researchers chose a different approach when they were asked to critically reflect upon their experiences participating in a PAR process for a book chapter (Cahill et al., 2004). Each writing in her own voice, the researchers reveal their intra-group diversity,

articulating their distinct points of view. In fact this mode of writing is much truer to our process, it gives a snapshot (albeit an edited and perhaps more articulate perspective), of our collaborative process where differences were negotiated. I am not suggesting that this necessarily means that the book chapter is “better” or more “authentic” because it captures the multiplicity of the group. Instead, I compare the two presentations of the researchers in order to highlight tensions between the possibilities of representation.

Degrees of participation

Noticeably absent from my dissertation research is Alice’s voice and concerns. Even though she was present everyday she did not participate to the same degree as everyone else. She did not share her experiences of racism or discrimination. Alice did not get involved in the heated discussions about one’s responsibility to the community. She abstained from discussion of contemporary social issues. If participatory action research creates a space for engaging differences, how do we explain Alice’s silences? Does her experience reflect a ‘tyranny of participation’ in which the consensus of the group is prioritized over her different perspective (Cooke & Kothari, 2001)? A closer look at her experience provides an opening for understanding not only the limits of participation, but also some of the possibilities.

When I joined this program I was only in America for a year and a half. I didn’t understand much English and I didn’t know how to express myself. I had very different background than other five women in this group. It made it more difficult to communicate with them. I felt left out.

The differences in language and culture were difficult to bridge in a project that placed an emphasis upon dialogue. In fact Alice’s English was quite good, but in a group context she felt understandably shy about communicating. While she could follow most

of the discussion, Alice often missed key words and was confused by the colloquial language used by the other young women. If the collective praxis approach created a process for others to work through and across difference, for Alice, it exacerbated differences. She “felt left out.” She felt different from the other researchers who not only shared a language, but who shared cultural and social references including music, popular culture, fashion, and a ‘know-how’ of contemporary social issues. For Alice, participating in the project was an experience in cultural immersion where she was learning about the perspectives of American young women of color. Although she attended the same public school as two of the other young women, Alice was enrolled in the bilingual program which meant she spent her days with other immigrants from China. She had never had intimate contact with young American people. After school she worked in Chinese restaurants with her family members. Through her friends, she had become involved with the local activist organization CAAVE, the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, specifically around the housing issues for Chinese immigrants. She also worked at KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), but all of her co-workers were also recent Chinese immigrants.

The other young women also had not had contact with Chinese immigrants and knew little about Chinese culture or the immigrant experience. Alice also therefore shared with the other young women her own experiences. Her perspective provided an important counterpoint within the project for the other young women’s experiences. Although often quiet Alice was nevertheless an active participant in the project asking questions which sometimes changed the direction of the conversation or opened up a new line of inquiry. She brought her electronic translator with her everyday, which she used to look up words that were new to her. Aware that she could not always follow their discussions,

the other young women would define new terms for her and explain their points of view. This was an important contribution to process.

If differences can be fertile ground for discovery, they can also serve to distinguish and even separate us. The differences between all of the researchers were obvious to everyone —“I never would have talked to you if it wasn't for the fact that we did this”—but Alice was *more different* than the others. She had emigrated from China less than two years before and could not relate to the concerns that were critical to the other young women involved, neither did she understand their culture. The others also did not understand Alice's culture. Where for her it was expected that as the only daughter it was her duty to work at least 20 hours a week outside of school and housework to contribute her earnings to the family, the other young women thought she was oppressed: “That's slave labor Alice! Why should you give them your money?” At the same time Alice also could not relate to the concerns expressed by the other young women. Unfamiliar with the word stereotype, which did not have the same meaning in Chinese, she did not at first understand the emotional reactions the other young women had to reading the youth service report, which inspired the research focus. In the development of the Makes Me Mad project she took a less active role, although her concerns about the lack of resources in the neighborhood were included in the project focus. Specifically, Alice was concerned with the quality of the environment, the poor housing conditions, the dirty streets, and the lack of concern for the physical environment of the neighborhood.

While Alice did not understand the relationship between stereotypes and the quality of life in her neighborhood environment initially, she decided she wanted to support the other young women and learn from them. She decided to take a less active role than the

others in the project. When decisions were being made about the project focus Alice followed the others' lead. Privately, she expressed to me that she did not feel that the issue of stereotypes was relevant to Chinese culture and she didn't think they applied to her. Coming from a Chinese context, American race relations were confusing and did not initially make sense to Alice. She did not identify as "a person of color" and had not reflected upon the position of the Chinese immigrant community within the broader context of American culture.

Towards the end of the summer 2002, a month into the project, however, Alice started to discuss with me the connections she saw between the ethnic and gendered hierarchies within Chinese culture and the stereotypes of young working class women of color. Her entry point into understanding the relationship between representational practice and social inequities was personal. It involved the ongoing conflicts between her family's value of her labor and her own value of education. Her family did not attach importance to her education and this was a point of contention. They wanted Alice to work with them in the restaurant business. Her labor was critical to their financial success. This situation— in which Alice was overworked and underpaid -- was an abrupt shift from her life in China where her education was central. Alice was at the top of her class in China and was not required to work by her family. In an American context everything was different. The education of her brother, on the other hand, was still valued by her family. Alice was very aware of the gendered discrepancies within her family and culture. The Makes Me Mad project provided Alice with a new lens for understanding her experiences.

Less than a year after the project began, Alice took the initiative of developing a related research project with her peers who were also Chinese immigrant young women. In this

forum Alice was gregarious, expressive, and involved. She spearheaded the project and was enthusiastic about introducing her colleagues to the processes of research and the issues of stereotyping. The group decided to develop their own action project around the issues of stereotyping but focused upon Chinese immigrant young women.¹⁰

The Chinese young women researchers worked together to develop a website in Chinese and a bookmark which would include some of the stereotypes they identified together. They thought a bookmark was more appropriate for Chinese culture than the Makes Me Mad sticker project, and it was something you could keep and hold onto. However, two years later the project has not progressed (although I still have hope) due to the demands of their work schedules and their personal experiences negotiating the immigrant experience. All of the young women have tried to stay in school despite both family pressures to drop out and the admittedly poor quality of their education. The young women expressed repeatedly their desire to speak English better, their worries about getting into a good college, and their anxieties about the tests like the NYS Regents and SAT exams. One friend of Alice's ran away from her family and rented a bed in Chinatown in order that she could finish high school while working more than 30 hours a week. Her family thought she was in another state where they had sent her to work in a restaurant. Another friend ran away from her family three times over the course of two years, in the end borrowing money in order to rent an apartment so she could finish high school.

The young immigrant Chinese women found themselves caught in an untenable position between cultures. On the one hand, the young women maintained a strong belief in

¹⁰ The Chinese researchers distinguished themselves from American born Chinese women.

education which was instilled in them from growing up in China and also reaffirmed in American culture. But for their families who were trying to establish their ground in this new country, their daughter's labor was critical to their financial stability. The stereotypes the young women identified in their research reflect the prominence of the family and the gendered hierarchies within Chinese culture. The representations of the Chinese young woman as subservient, quiet, dependent, obedient, hard working, and caring for the family constructs an ideal of the "good daughter." Through representations of the ideal daughter young Chinese immigrant women are regulated in their culture, by their families, and by themselves.

For young immigrant Chinese women like Alice and her co-researchers, their problems negotiating their family's demands and their own concerns about education have everything to do with their futures. They feel very isolated in negotiating these pressures. When I brought up the idea of identifying a local organization who might take the young women's concerns seriously and advocate for their needs, they were pessimistic that it would make any difference. In the end, Alice found herself in a similar position to the Makes Me Mad researchers, tracing connections between her devaluation as a "not good enough" daughter, her economic exploitation, and her self-understanding.

Redefining the role of the academic researcher: Working "in service" of the collaboration

How does a collaborative process shift the role of the researcher? Previously I discussed my role as a facilitator/ co-collaborator, but I did not address how my own research process was shifted as a result of being involved in a participatory action research project. Below I map out the intersections between my own research process studying

young urban women's everyday lives and my role as part of a PAR collective. Moving between the "layers" of our collaborative research approach (Fallis & Opatow, 2003), I shift perspectives in my 'doubled' research role, inside and outside the PAR project. These roles were not always so distinct. My analysis will articulate the contours of the approach while raising questions that speak to some of the challenges of doing collaborative research.

Tracing an outline of my role working "in service" of the collaborative offers insight into the redefinition of the research process in a PAR project. Instead of identifying a particular research problem to be studied, at the outset I staked the parameters of my research focus, in order to leave open the project definition and follow the lead of the collective. In preparation, I conducted extensive reviews of the literature focusing on women and the city, urban neighborhood change, young people, and more specifically, young women and the urban environment, urban geography, economic theory, the literature on the Lower East Side, and contemporary theories of identity (cf. Cahill, 2002). I was not "an empty vessel waiting to be filled" (Freire, 1997); I had strong ideas about the issues I thought were especially significant to young women living in the city. I had already identified gaps in the literature based on my own experience as a young urban woman growing up in the city and as an adult working with young urban people. I had a definite point of view grounded in critical race and feminist theory, urban political economy, critical pedagogy, collaborative research, and in my work doing research with young people as an activist and as a teacher. I gathered general materials for our collective use including books, articles, maps, as well as internet resources. I met with organizations in the community to set up possible partnerships for the group. I was prepared to mobilize resources quickly for our work depending on what direction we went.

Working from the inside out, theory takes root within the PAR project. Instead of being framed by concerns in the literature, the PAR process creates a space for mapping new connections, for producing new knowledge, and perhaps even disrupting the dominant knowledge. The Makes Me Mad project is intended to be disruptive, to make people angry, to challenge the ways in which young women are represented in the media, in academic literature, and in their everyday lives. While the issue of stereotyping is addressed in the social research (Deaux & Philogène, 2001, Leadbeater & Way, 1996), the connections between urban development and psychological development are not well-developed in the literature. The scope of my research was determined by the collaborative: to research the relationship between the lack of resources and the stereotypes of young urban women of color and to consider how young women negotiate stereotypes in their processes of identification. I was, in effect, 'charged' with contextualizing the collective's project.¹¹ My role as a researcher in this regard was to develop the analysis of the project, to situate the project in historic and contemporary political and economic contexts, tracing connections between interdisciplinary bodies of literature including critical race theory, black feminism, history, critical geography, and psychology. My research is intended firstly, to contribute to the overall project goals of the Makes Me Mad project so that it can be used strategically when necessary by the researchers, who may mobilize the language of social science and the analysis to articulate their needs to selected audiences who might not take the project as seriously otherwise. My dissertation research is also expected to contribute to academic

¹¹ It is scary to let others direct your work and shape your research agenda. PAR also involves a willingness on the part of the researcher to give up autonomy and self-control. It involves a level of trust. Different, I would argue, from 'gaining trust of informants' in order to find out information about their lives; a rightfully suspicious and somewhat dubious distortion of trust in order to gain an 'inside' perspective. Instead trust, in this sense has to do with giving up independence in order to foreground the collaboration, a belief that a collective vision will be stronger than one's own.

literatures concerning young people; participatory and collaborative research methodologies, gentrification, social justice, urban and community studies, critical race and feminist theory, and critical geographical research more generally.

My process--also a cyclical qualitative layered methodology-- pivoted on the larger collaborative PAR project. The most significant and thickest "layer" of my project was the Makes Me Mad project. Each turn of the PAR process pushed me to ask new questions and reconsider my interpretations. Another layer of my process included the development of complementary research methods in order to understand young women's relationship to the urban environment. To this end I used ethnographic research methods as a participant observer within the PAR project. Everyday I took field notes based on our discussions and process, I taped many of our discussions, and documented shared materials. In addition I also used archival and historical research methods to document neighborhood changes in the Lower East Side using such sources as census data, New York City Department of City Planning documents, school reports, and newspaper clippings.

My analysis process was also layered. Within the PAR project I participated in the ongoing data analysis described above, and as part of this process I would ask questions and check my interpretations with researchers. This "checking in" process continued as we met beyond the timeframe of the original project to get together socially or work on the website, the report, and prepare for our conference presentation over the next year. The invitation to write a book chapter together on the PAR process (Cahill et al., 2004), presented an extremely valuable opportunity for further critical reflection on the project, another layer of analysis within the PAR project, which in turn, became a critical layer of analysis that fed into my study.

The multiple-method PAR approach permitted me to contrast, compare, and triangulate different sources of data to understand better the concerns of young women growing up in the city. My 'data' includes detailed ethnographic field notes, transcripts of over 50 hours of taped group discussions, project materials, collected shared writings from the journals, and research products including the book chapter, our conference presentation notes, the Makes Me Mad report, the stickers, the website. While my analysis of the data followed the general guidelines of established qualitative content analysis procedures (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 1998), its analytic focus had already been defined by the Makes Me Mad project. Following the broad brushstrokes of the stated research concerns developed within the larger project, my data analysis process involved reviewing all of the materials and an initial sorting out of the data to develop themes as they related (and didn't relate) to the Makes Me Mad focus. As I listened to transcripts of our discussions, read through field notes, read the report, the website, the book chapter, I took notes, wrote down questions, noted contradictions, attentive to what came up again and again even if it was not addressed directly as part of the Makes Me Mad project. For example, a recurrent discussion amongst the researchers was the issue of education. Yet school did not come up in our initial conversations about issues facing young women of color on the Lower East Side. It did not make it onto the collective list of "opportunities and constraints" on our wall. Why? The absence of one of the most important issues in their lives was remarkable (see chapter 5). The issue was, however, later identified as part of the Makes Me Mad project; "uneducated" was one of the 6 stereotypes the researchers decided to feature on their stickers and they compiled a very long list of "Education Needs" in their report.

The Makes Me Mad project was at the center of my data analysis process. Triangulating different data sources, while paying attention to our differences and the contradictions within the data, I coded the data into broad themes and then developed theoretical constructs with reference to the Makes Me Mad project focus. In my analysis of young women's experiences of education, for example, first I identified all of the data that addressed the more general theme of "school." Then, keeping in mind the original research questions, I coded data where the researchers identified the lack of resources, stereotypical performances, etc. looking for variations on this theme, including contradictions. In this way I developed theoretical constructs grounded within the data, and created another layer of interpretation which served to complicate and extend the research concerns of the Makes Me Mad project. My data analysis was a shifting process that moved between repeating ideas, themes, theoretical constructs, the Makes Me Mad project, the literature, and the researchers themselves whom I continue to meet with now 2 ½ years after the initial project (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Perhaps the most significant challenge in my own research process has been the issue of how to write about the collaborative work. To begin with there was the obvious disjuncture between articulating the collaborative's work in my singular authorial voice: How do I articulate the multiplicity of our perspectives? How to capture loud, angry, sometimes quivering voices or document the silences in my writing of the 'data'? Is it possible to do justice to the outrage that fueled our research process (Fine & Weis, 1996) and the humor that sustained us, in my writing? Another critical issue was the problem of representation especially given my position as a white researcher working with younger women of color; certainly I did not want to follow the long tradition of white researchers, and ethnographers in particular, writing about "others." This tradition is exemplified in the recent best selling book Random Family (2003) by Adrian Le Blanc, a

book following the romances of two young Latina women from the Bronx. This book, a page-turning 'true urban soap opera that reveals the clenched grip of the streets' and 'the insidious damage of poverty,' is directed to a liberal audience (book description retrieved February 3, 2003: <http://www.soros.org/events/randomfamily/forum.ram>).

Random Family is in same genre as the more famous books by Kotlowitz (1991) and Kozol (1995) whose compelling, accessible, and compassionate stories focus upon 'innocent' children (who are of course blameless victims) and are written primarily for a white liberal audience who don't have contact with poverty or people who are struggling with social inequities. This is not my objective. Like Robin D.G. Kelley (1997, 4) I don't want to engage in a "defense that turns the discourse on its head, "flipping the script" in order to paint a noble unblemished portrait of the black urban poor" instead my objective is to articulate the complexity and humanity of young women working class women of color in their everyday lives.

Annisia and I had a long discussion about the book Random Family in the summer of 2003 which informed and clarified my approach to writing about our collective project. I want to write in a way that offers an alternative to, and a critique of, this seemingly "benign" genre of writing, which is dangerous in part because it seems harmless. Dangerous in the same way the report that inspired the Makes Me Mad project is dangerous, this genre reinforces of stereotypes and recounts powerful cultural narratives in a breezy journalistic style that is too easy to digest. While claiming 'experiential author(ity)', "I was there," Leblanc erases herself from her narrative, as if she was a fly on the wall seeing everything, even getting inside her subjects' heads, as if she knows what they were thinking. Her story feels 'real' because she writes in a documentary style, which captures the tiny details of everyday life (Richardson, 1994). Part of what is so problematic about this genre is that it offers such a close-up perspective you lose sight

of the context, the political and economic forces which shape their situation. What would an alternative to this “talking about the natives” model look like? Taking my cue from the Makes Me Mad project, I want my research to “speak back” to a long tradition of social researchers --anthropologists, psychologists, and social reformers --who write about “how the other half live,” reinforcing stereotypes in pathological or overly romanticized portraits of poverty, no matter how well intended they might be.

Doing a PAR project I had hoped would resolve some of the representational and ethical issues of social research. Premised on a critique of the uneven power relations between researchers and their subjects, in a PAR process participants take control of their self-definitions (Pain, 2004). Rather than “speaking for others” or “on behalf of the oppressed” (Alcoff, 1995; Spivak, 1999, Minh-ha, 1989), I wanted to speak *with*. There is, however, no getting around the issue that as an academic researcher my role involves representing in some way the researchers and their concerns. My engagement in the problems of representation is guided by feminist researchers who argue against “speaking for,” and instead insist that we consciously position our perspectives as situated in a particular standpoint, even as we acknowledge that our own situatedness is not a static point, but always changing as we learn and shift our point of view (see special issue of the Professional Geographer, 1994).

Representation comes with responsibility. The primary responsibility of a writer/academic researcher in a PAR process should be to the values and concerns of the research team. In this regard, the PAR project can provide a blueprint for the academic researcher to orient their work. My approach to writing is guided by the commitment of the Makes Me Mad project to disrupting stereotypes. Not only is the content of my dissertation structured by the research concerns of the Makes Me Mad project, in my

writing I try to capture the complexity of the young women, highlighting data that runs counter to dominant scripts (Bhavani, 1999). This does not mean I emphasize the heroic stories of poor young women who make it against all odds (another trope) as opposed to the sensationalistic stories of teenage moms. Instead, my objective was to express the multiplicity of young women, the ways in which they both accommodate and challenge stereotypes in their self-identifications, to document their 'in betweenness' (Katz, 1994), their multiply situated, contradictory selves.

My dissertation structure follows the research agenda of the Makes Me Mad project in its consideration of the relationship between representations, self-identification, and community development. While I take seriously my particular contribution as a researcher to develop the analysis, to make connections to wider social and political processes and situate the project in the critical social science literature, I ground my project in collectively produced knowledge (Zusman, 2004). In this way, my research process is conceptualized as an exchange. While on the one hand, I agree with Mitchell (2004) that our role as researchers is to develop an analysis that can be used practically by activists and practitioners, my practice as a collaborative researcher complicates this perspective. I worry, following Zusman (2004, 144), that "the theories, concepts and categories conceptualized by academics ... are very distant from urgencies raised by activist practices," and that our analyses will not be relevant and useful. Zusman's argument for what she calls "a collective horizontal research practice" addresses the reciprocity which informs participatory engagement and does not privilege the academic perspective. Instead, it is, as I understand it, my responsibility to contribute the analysis of the Makes Me Mad project to the academic literature and to the methodological

literature of activist social scientists. In this way I work on behalf of the Makes Me Mad project, rather than speak on its behalf.

The consideration of audience is critical to my approach. As I write I keep in mind my multiple audiences. While I write my dissertation research with an academic audience in mind, at the same time I consider the Fed Up Honeys as one of my primary audiences. The researchers will have an opportunity to review and comment upon the dissertation while it is draft form. As I write I think 'what would Carmen think about this part?' 'would Jasmine agree? why or why not?' knowing that the researchers do not always agree with each other, myself included. I do not aim for consensus as I know that not all of the researchers will agree with my interpretations. I do, however, aim for a transparency within my analysis. What I mean by this is that I want my situated perspective to be explicit, I want my readers, the Fed Up Honeys included, to understand how and why I came to my conclusions.

A more involved process

Doing PAR is undoubtedly a more involved research process on every point, involving substantial investments of time, self, and finances that goes beyond what is usually expected in social research. It is a time-consuming process. Group work is slow. There is no way around it. If you want to work *with* people (as opposed to *on* people), make group decisions, train researchers, and facilitate dissent, it is an involved commitment. PAR is messy, all over the place, and sometimes feels out of control. It involves working with many different personalities and negotiating difference. And it involves spending time just getting to know each other. In practical terms, this means you need to

schedule a lot of time to do this kind of work, the original four weeks I had scheduled for the project was not sufficient. With our extra funding we were able to stretch out extra weeks, but still a year later we were still working on some of our research products. With the 20/20 vision of hindsight, I would recommend establishing a structure with deadlines because each step takes time, especially developing research products or whatever type of “action” the collaborative decides to implement. Coordinating our collaborative work was extremely difficult after the original project was officially over, and once everyone was back in school, working jobs, back to their everyday life. And so for us this meant that the development of our research products took much longer than anticipated and the slowness was often frustrating and at times there were lulls in the momentum and energy of the project.

My own research process was also necessarily slower. Each step of my process was more involved both within and out of the PAR project. Part of what was difficult about the slowness was that I was unprepared for it and did not know what to expect. I had not taken into account all of the work involved in each of the steps of the PAR project. Collaborative work is really difficult when everyone is not together in the same room, especially given the fact that not everyone always had consistent access to internet, and that we operated on different schedules with different expectations of what was possible to accomplish within a given time frame. Even getting everyone together was a challenge, most of the time 3 or 4 of us would get together and try to make decisions for others or I would meet with researchers individually. Developing, setting up and maintaining a website involves a lot of work. While designed originally by the researchers, I took on the role of updating it and maintaining it since I was based at the Graduate Center. This may have been easier with access to more up to date resources and equipment. Similarly, writing our report collaboratively after the project was ‘officially’

over took a lot of time because it required constant communication between several members of the research team. The design and layout of the report was another involved effort which was hindered by our limited resources, elementary graphic design skills, and lack of funding.

Relationships are at the center of a PAR process and this necessitates an investment of self. It is intimate. And working with young people who are making decisions about their lives in a turbulent economic and social time is complex. Depending on who you are it may translate into different responsibilities or commitments. For me, being involved meant friendship, and all that comes with that, and it also meant sometimes working as an advocate, helping some to find jobs, others to transfer schools, to talk through how to negotiate complex situations involving the school system, the law, parents, etc.

PAR also involved a financial investment. The costs will depend of course on the time commitment, the number of people involved, the agreed amount of terms of payment, and your own time. Sustained long term research requires substantial investment of resources. Doing action research may also require investment into the development of research products. A critical issue in doing PAR is funding which may be difficult to obtain especially when the scope of research cannot be ascertained in advance of the research process (Pain, 2004).

Conclusion: What is the value of PAR as a research methodology?

If PAR is a longer, more involved, and expensive process, as my own experiences and others' suggest, why do it? What is the value of PAR as a research methodology? Now

receiving critical attention across the disciplines, PAR offers a promising epistemological framework for researchers committed to social justice and change in an especially unstable political and economic context (see chapter 6). Scholars across the disciplines are not only questioning the social relevance of traditional research practices but also call attention to the ways in which research agendas are too often a handmaiden to funding priorities, dominant interests, and serve to reproduce hegemonic knowledge (Kelley, 1997, 1998; Harding, 1987). PAR is not, however, always exempt from this criticism, as the ideals are not always reflected in reality. Some critiques even go so far as to identify participation as a potential form of domination when the rhetoric is used to achieve the opposite objectives (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Nevertheless, keeping in mind that all research processes involve relations of power, rather than “throwing the baby out with the bath water,” perhaps instead we need to provide a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of participatory work and a self-conscious engagement with issues of power (Kesby, in press). PAR does still offer a promising alternative, and is undoubtedly appealing to activist researchers (Ruddick, 2004; Fuller & Kitchin, 2004; Pain, 2004) concerned with shifting power and challenging exclusionary practices that reproduce and maintain structural inequities, within and outside of the academy. The *Makes Me Mad* project is an example of how a research process can function as a site for “counter work,” “where what could be, is sought; where what has been, is critiqued; and where what is, is troubled” (Torre et al, 2001,150).

Affecting social change with social research is not a straightforward enterprise. Social change, as Fine and Barreras (2001) state “is a long haul that demands the engagement of multiple players, relying upon multiple discourses, working on multiple levels and constantly (re)forming allies.” It is a strategic engagement of research of “use.” Social inequities, Fine & Barreras argue, such as the related violences of patriarchy, racism,

and poverty, are not cognitive problems (Ibid). A critical question that follows is how to best present research findings so that they are “received.” Scholars have noted the difficulty of informing social policy, which is often driven by unarticulated agendas, even while lip service is given to community involvement or participation (Pain & Francis, 2003). One sticking point is the quantitative-qualitative divide, some arguing that numbers are sexier and quicker to digest, others that personal stories can be more powerful and accessible. A related dilemma is who research should address (which of course has consequences for the shape it is presented in). This issue is often presented as the ‘top down’ policy research versus ‘bottom up’ grassroots and activist research (Pain, 2003; Ruddick, 2004). PAR prioritizes the latter as its primary function is to provide research for community use. It can, however, certainly also be mobilized to also affect policy, as the Makes Me Mad project is now doing in terms of reaching out to youth service organizations and foundations. The ‘bottom up’ approach also places emphasis upon the personal transformation of the people involved, the sort of transformation that is mutually constitutive with sustainable social change.

Aside from its primary objective as a research approach “of use,” PAR’s generative methodological role in producing new knowledge is less understood. To conclude, I will address the value of PAR as a research methodology, while at the same time discussing some of the challenges involved in this approach. My discussion will focus on three interrelated critical contributions to new knowledge: the involvement of underrepresented perspectives in the research process; the emphasis upon a relational analytic process which brings to light issues of context and scale; and knowledge as the “struggle for interpretative power”(Pratt, 1999).

Including excluded perspectives

At the heart of PAR lies the “the understanding that people-especially those who have experienced historic oppression—hold deep knowledge about their lives and experiences, and should help shape the questions, frame the interpretations and style the research products that ultimately effect them most intimately (Torre & Fine, in press). Committed to bringing new and underrepresented voices into the academy, PAR acknowledges the intellectual power of what Gramsci (1999) identifies as “organic intellectuals” whose critical perspectives are developed from everyday experiences of struggle at the intersection of race, class and gender (Fine et al., 2003). Foregrounding the perspectives of marginalized groups creates an ‘opening’ for critique and troubling the status quo (Torre et al, 2001) as the Fed Up Honeys did when they questioned accepted practices of using stereotypical profiles of young people of color in order to raise funds or as an approach to programming. The researchers pointed out (Rios-Moore et al., 2004): “This oversimplified approach plays into the “culture of poverty” and loses sight of our specific needs;” and so they developed the Makes Me Mad project because “we realized that we, as the target audience for preventative and “at risk” programming, could give a unique perspective on what we feel are our needs by refuting stereotypes directed at young urban womyn of color” (Rios-Moore et al., 2004).

What happens when underrepresented perspectives are invited to participate in the production of “official” knowledges? The same question has been raised by feminist and critical race scholars (Kelley, 1998) who have shown how women and people of color entering the academy not only have an opportunity to transform themselves, but also effectively transform the institution. This is the ground upon which new knowledge is rooted. To include the excluded is to push scholarship in new directions, ask new

questions, question old assumptions and 'think outside the box' beyond the privileged perspectives of the ivory tower. On the other hand, whether PAR would be an effective model for excavating privilege within privileged communities is debatable (M. Torre, personal communication, July 2004). Would, for example, wealthy suburbanites identify the issue of finance inequities in urban and suburban schools? It remains a challenge to consider how to use it in "studying up."

Because theory is developed from within the PAR process as opposed to being framed by the concerns of the literature, there are more opportunities for challenging accepted points of view. In this case, the Makes Me Mad project contested the academic literature's preoccupation with young women of color's bodies, sexuality and pregnancy, in effect holding up a mirror to the literature and suggesting the critical problems young women face have to do with the ways in which they are perceived and represented as "problems."

PAR is an approach that could be understood to be more rigorous, more involved, that gets "better" data because insiders "simply know things that outsiders don't" (Torre et al., 2001). Without romanticizing "inside" knowledge as the "truth," or erasing difference between diverse young women of color, there is a line of vision that "insiders" carry that is not readily accessible to outsiders (Fine et al., 2003; Domosh, 2003). Young women are less likely to pathologize or romanticize themselves, more likely to understand the ways in which different parts of their lifeworlds are connected (Ibid). "Inside" cannot, of course, be defined statically as a singular place, it is a shifting, multivalent perspective. This complexity is especially evident within a collaborative when *your* 'inside' is different than *mine*. PAR values the perspective gained from a particular standpoint (Hartstock,

1983; Collins, 2000; Allen & Howard, 2000), such as a shared interpretation of discrimination across multiple different experiences. 'Inside' could be identified as an emotion, what it *feels like*, and at the same time addresses the banal negotiations of everyday life invisible to those 'outside,' and that might slip below the radar of "data." Experiences like noticing only 2 of your classmates that you started with 9th grade are still in your homeroom, or being the only person of color taking the advanced placement test for math. Or being carefully surveilled in one store and ignored by a salesperson in the next. Not finding clothes to fit "our" bodies. Or that the bodegas are being replaced by 24 hour Korean markets catering to newcomers and others from outside of the neighborhood. In a PAR process observations of everyday life become validated as data. Witness the production of new knowledge.

Involving excluded perspectives in a PAR process also involves expanding the audiences of research. Who do we want to address with our research? Why? A PAR approach offers multiple research products which are not only different ways of speaking back, but also serves to engage different audiences (as discussed previously).

A relational analysis

Starting with the assumption that the subjects and agents of knowledge are multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory, a PAR process has to take into account different perspectives and then it has to grapple with the spaces between different standpoints. As Maria Torre argues, a diverse research group would produce research so "implicitly optically and ethically layered, that it will have to address issues that otherwise might be left uninterrogated.." (Torre, 2003, 2). This goes beyond the thick descriptions of

ethnographic tradition, to actually interrogating the spaces between different perspectives.

Foregrounding contextualized local knowledge, based in experiences in the home, neighborhood and school, the researchers articulate their individual perspectives. Through the process of questioning, comparing, and relating to each other's experiences the participants in a PAR process begin the process of social theorizing and engage in a "relational analysis." For example, in sharing their distinct experiences of educational inequities and discrimination, the researchers created an analysis that cuts across geographical settings and "jumps scales" (Smith, 1993), for instance linking Annissa's experiences at an elite private college with Ruby's and Carmen's experiences at one of the ten worst public schools in the city. In other words, through collaborative knowledge production the researchers shift from an individual to a social perspective "jumping scales" of analysis, between the body and wider social issues.

Similarly, in relaying personal stories of discrimination in the supermarket, school, and neighborhood, the researchers start to build a broad based analysis of stereotypical representations of young women of color within their neighborhood. Pushing the analysis further, the researchers identify, again through comparing personal experiences, the "lack of resources" in their schools, homes, jobs, capital, in other words the disinvestment in their community. By pointing to larger interconnected issues of structural race and poverty, the researchers effectively extend their analysis beyond the neighborhood scale to the larger political economic context. Drawing connections between micro- and macro scales of the environment, a relational analysis starts to identify the multiple shifting contexts of one's everyday experiences.

While PAR does necessarily emphasize personal experiences, and thus the local scale of analysis, as critics are quick to point out, a relational analysis of collaborative knowledge production starts to trace what Cindi Katz (2001) calls “a topography for feminist political engagement,” a “grounded but translocal politics” that highlights the contours connecting situated experiences, along which coalitions between diverse places might be built (2001, 1231). Connecting the dots between schools, housing, jobs, neighborhood, the Makes Me Mad project could still be understood as local, but in addressing social issues of race and poverty it proposes a translocal analysis. The Makes Me Mad project, which focuses on a particular neighborhood, the Lower East Side, is a pointed critique of disinvestment as it connects with race and gender that is relevant to urban neighborhoods across the United States. Even while grounding their research in their neighborhood, the researchers discussed its wider application. “It doesn't really have to do with the Lower East Side.” Even though their project starts with personal experiences in their neighborhood and ends with specific recommendations for “community building needs,” the researchers recognize how it goes further.

Interpretative power

A PAR project is committed to engaging difference as a lens of analysis (Torre, 2005) and has the potential to articulate a bifurcated perspective (Pratt, 1999) of being the “other” in a dominant culture, what DuBois calls “double consciousness.” Engaging a doubled or even multiply situated perspective, the Makes Me Mad project “forces dialogues in which many would not willingly engage. In the process something very powerful happens: white participants experience knowledge not as power, but the way indigenous people have often experienced it: as pain” (Pratt, 1999, 47). The Makes Me Mad project is angry and it engages others, depending on who they are, to either feel

their own pain or experience the pain and guilt of acknowledging racism, a “prick of the “psychic amnesia” that has infected America” (Torre & Fine, in press). The *Makes Me Mad* project engages in a “struggle for interpretative power” (Pratt, 1999), a struggle for self-definition, in a sense “control over the terms and conditions under which they will develop their relations with the nation-state, the global economy, the communication revolution, .. and other historical processes” (Pratt, 1999, 39). Engaging the contradictions, ambiguities, and pain of a doubled consciousness, represents a critical contribution to new knowledge. It is also as Pratt suggests (1999,47), fertile ground for social change: “As we approach this next millennium, that space of pain, sad to say, may be the most constructive space in which the struggle for peace and justice can go forward.”

Chapter 3.

New “ghetto” productions and the social construction of young working class women of color

How does it feel to be a problem? that you —your body-yourself—is constructed as a problem? W.E.B. Du Bois (1989) reframed that question, which referred to what was then called “The Negro Problem,” as “the problem of the color line,” which he identified as the problem of the 20th century. Richard Wright was, however, more explicit when he said -- “there was never a Negro problem, only a white problem” (Wright, 1957, 99 cited in Singh, 2000, 39), turning attention to the ways in which structural racism and poverty maintains white privilege.

This chapter will address this re-framed problem, specifically looking at the connections between public representations of young working class women of color, white privilege and related disinvestments, privatization, and the destabilization of a community, in order to shed light on the relationship between neoliberalism and young women’s everyday lives. My discussion will trace the downscaling of state responsibilities for social reproduction in order to understand how social problems at the intersections of race, class and gender are defined and wrapped around real and hypothetical bodies (bodies which become even more prominent in a neoliberal context).

In their project “Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of young urban womyn of color,” the researchers identified a central shared concern: the issue of public representations. The social assault upon their subjectivities became an entry point for the young women’s investigation of the relationship between the disinvestment of their community and their self-understanding (Rios-Moore et al., 2004). My analysis follows this lead. I trace the ways in which representations of young women of color are constructed in the public

sphere at various scales, revealing the pressures placed on young women and their families as a result of economic restructuring at the urban scale (the next chapter will look at how they negotiate these pressures). The demands young working class women of color negotiate include historic and contemporary pressures to reform (assimilate – here holding up whiteness as the normative ideal), to move out (displacement), and render their selves invisible (even while their bodies remains hypervisible in the public sphere).

Specifically, in this chapter I consider how processes of gentrification inform social constructions of young women, and how discourse functions in relation to urban restructuring. This chapter will address the relationship between representations and the material conditions of the everyday lives of young women living and growing up on the Lower East Side of NYC. My project is two fold. To begin with I introduce and trace the relationship between historic changes in the Lower East Side neighborhood and representations of young women. I then look at how representations function in a contemporary neoliberal context, engaging in discourse analysis to understand how ideology and space are mutually constituted.

The neighborhood

Due to its choice location in downtown Manhattan nearby the financial and corporate center of one of the world's most powerful "global cities," the Lower East Side neighborhood has been under intense pressure to gentrify over the past twenty or so years. This is not without precedent. The neighborhood has been a "tempting target for planned improvements" over the last century (Abu-Lughod, 1994, 19), as developers

have attempted to attract higher income residents to the community.¹² The redevelopment of the neighborhood has been forestalled due to the Depression and other economic recessions, and structural factors including post war suburban expansion, the construction of a significant amount of public housing in the area in the 1950s and 60s, and the lack of adequate public transportation to the area, most notably the unrealized plans for the 2nd Avenue subway (which before the Metrocard, meant that the neighborhood was a two fare zone if you lived on the eastern edge of the neighborhood). Therefore, in spite of its close proximity to the city's financial district, the Lower East Side's image as an immigrant and working class community has persisted, reflective of its history sheltering poor people who have been re-located, displaced, and excluded from elsewhere. The Lower East Side is arguably the most famous immigrant neighborhood in the US, housing successive waves of the newly arrived since the 19th century. In fact, much of the densely built tenement housing that accommodated the poor immigrant population still remains today. Janet Abu-Lughod remarked, "The low profile of the area's mostly four-to-six story buildings stands in marked contrast to the skyscrapers both north and southwest of them, and their low values and rents reflect the zone's anomalous position" (Abu-Lughod, 1994, 17). While zoning laws have constrained the height of the buildings in the neighborhood, the neighborhood's current real estate market has defied expectations.

In the 19th and early 20th century, neighborhood residents actively mobilized against the exploitative housing and labor conditions which typified the immigrant experience (discussed below), resulting in another long-standing complementary image associated with the Lower East Side neighborhood, that of political activism and

¹² Previous initiatives such as proposals by the 1929 Regional Plan Association, and landlord efforts to connect with city policy to build middleclass housing in the 1950s, were thwarted by economic shifts

collective resistance (Mele, 2000). Not only did the Lower East Side figure principally in the early 20th century labor and trade unionization movements, it also became well known for its political protests such as the 1874 Tompkins Square rally for employment, or the protests for worker safety following the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire organized by women workers. Women, who typically play multiple roles as workers, consumers, home-makers, managers of the household budget, and mothers, have been in a critical position in relation to social networks and therefore have played a central role in local activism (Mele, 2000, 60; Joselit, 1986). For example, in the 19th century young working class immigrant women were particularly active in organizing successful collective food boycotts and rent strikes. Young women organized New York City's first mass rent strike in 1904 on the Lower East Side, holding "meetings to discuss strategy, picketed buildings where tenants were forcibly evicted for non-payment of rent, organized building-level "tenant unions," and went from tenement to tenement drumming up support for their activities" (Ibid).

Throughout the Lower East Side's history, young women have always played an important role in stabilizing and improving the community, participating in informal and formal struggles for a safer, healthier, and affordable place to live. Informally women helped each other to take care of each others' children, secured the home, and created invaluable social networks (Sharff, 1998). More formally, women played key roles in activist organizations such as the 19th century Ladies Anti-Beef Trust Association which organized a community-wide boycott of local kosher butchers to protest the high costs of meat; the Puerto Rican Mother's Association which was active in the police brutality and anti-poverty movement in the 1960s; and, from the same time period, the Cooper

including economic depression/ recession, post war suburban expansion, and shifts in labor markets (Mele, 2000).

Square Community Development Committee which successfully contested urban renewal plans for the neighborhood (Mele, 2000; Lawson & Naison, 1986). Starting in the 1970s (continuing to the present) women spearheaded the community garden movement, planting trees, vegetables, and flower gardens on vacant lots, which had become dumping grounds for toxic waste, burnt out cars, and shooting galleries for drug users.

One might wonder why young working class women of color, who have been pivotal in the improvement of their neighborhood (arguably even paving the way for the gentrification of their community), are now threatened with social and spatial exclusion. Now as the neighborhood is reinvested in and gentrified, young women, who have so often held together the fragmenting community, filling in gaps with one's body, caring for others, negotiating the messy details of everyday life, and improving the neighborhood, are now at risk of being displaced (or replaced). Now associated with "risk," in economic terms the presence of young working class women of color translates into a financial risk to the neighborhood investment. From this perspective, the success of gentrification depends upon their disappearance (Wright, 2004). The working class communities who have typified and symbolized the neighborhood for over a hundred years are now either gone already, or in jeopardy of displacement. As these communities become destabilized, the neighborhood's image of political action and collective resistance has become diluted. Christopher Mele suggests that "in the East Village, real estate developers have translated the symbolic value of cultural difference into economic value, attracting the middle-class renters, diners, and shoppers who find allure in this edgier version of "bohemian mix" (Mele, 2000, 3). The radical history of the neighborhood has now become co-opted through "symbolic inclusion" in representations of counter-cultural differences marketed as part of middle and upper class urban development.

Discursive “work”

Why are young women of color stereotyped as ‘Likely to become teen moms’; as ‘Lazy and on welfare’; or a ‘Burden to society’? How did they come to be identified as ‘Promiscuous?’; as ‘Uneducated; or as ‘In abusive relationships’ ? What is the background of the six stereotypes the researchers selected to be showcased in their stickers? Drawing connections between historic and contemporary representational practices my analysis sheds light on the ways in which these stereotypes function in a contemporary context, both building upon and breaking with, earlier “regimes of representation”(Hall, 1997c).

Throughout history, as I shall discuss, stereotypes of “the other” serve to blame, regulate, legitimate social inequities, mediate contradictions of capitalism, and project social anxieties onto vulnerable populations of poor, working class, immigrant, communities of color. A consideration of the relationship between representational practices, difference, and power reveals how these stereotypes “work” to produce young women politically, ideologically, economically, and *geographically*, in the neoliberal context of the gentrifying/still disinvested Lower East Side.

Discourse produces, through different practices of representations (stereotypes), a form of knowledge about the Other (young working class women of color) that is deeply implicated in relations of power (Hall, 1997b, 260). Through the strategy of ‘splitting,’ stereotypes exclude everything that does not ‘fit’, symbolically fixing boundaries between ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’, between what belongs and what does not, between insiders and outsiders (Hall, 1997b, 258). Stereotyping is a signifying practice that operates through fixing meaning on the difference between opposites such as white/black, male/female, nature/culture. We know what it means to be White because we mark its difference from

its 'others'—Whiteness is not Black (Hall, 1997b, 234-5). James Baldwin explains: "the Negro tells us where the bottom is: *because he is there*, and *where he is*, beneath us, we know where the limits are and how far we must not fall" (Baldwin, 1961, 111, italics original). Structured by unequal relations of power, the binary oppositions are characterized by Derrida as a "violent hierarchy" (Derrida, 1972, 41 cited in Hall, 1997b, 258).

Stereotypes of 'at risk' young women of color also 'tell us where the bottom is.' The high school drop-out who engages in risky behaviors and becomes a teenage mother who must rely on the state for public assistance is produced as a failure in contrast to the ideal young woman who exudes a confident and responsible sexuality but delays motherhood in order to embark on a successful career (Harris, 2004). If the construction of success and failure are marked in opposition to each other, Harris argues that together they serve to discipline young women into taking personal responsibility. Within this framework, failure "is attributed to poor choices, insufficient effort, irresponsible families, bad neighborhoods and lazy communities." Success, on the other hand is constructed as a matter of personal application and good choices "papering over the enduring and perhaps deepening inequalities generated by class and race stratification in current times" (Harris, 2004, 9& 35).

Representations signify and symbolize social conflicts by referring to different types of human bodies (Omi & Winant, 2002, 123). The body is a significant discursive site through which difference is often naturalized and essentialized. History is transformed into nature (Mullings, 1994, 271), in an attempt to "halt the inevitable 'slide' of meaning" (Hall, 1997b, 245). For example, representations of young women of color as promiscuous and oversexed suggest that it is in their "true nature" to become teen

moms, so natural that it requires 'no comment' (ibid). Furthermore, the spectacle of young women's bodies, as we shall discuss later, functions as a representational practice through which young women are both discursively produced and regulated.

Structural inequities and social injustice are linked to the ways subjects are represented. Representational practices are productive social processes by which intersections of race, class and gender are constructed, "inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi & Winant, 2002, 124) in a specific historical context. Anthropologist Leith Mullings argues that representations "tell a story about why things are the way they are, setting out a framework by which hierarchy is explained and mediating contradictions among classes, between beliefs and experiences" (Mullings, 1994, 266). In this way discourse rationalizes the organization and distribution of resources, facilitating "consent" on the part of the public for the social order (Gramsci, 1999), defining the limits of social action by justifying the status quo as natural or normal. How is it that the high drop out rates of young people of color have become normalized (Fine, 1991)? Why is it not a surprise that there are statistically high rates of teen pregnancy on the Lower East Side? Representations function as part of a larger discourse, and become common sense ways of comprehending and acting in the world. An analysis of representations can therefore clarify our understanding of social relations, and the changing meanings of race, class and gender. In this case we will consider specifically how these shifting meanings are spatialized on the Lower East Side.

Focusing on selected historical moments, I trace the production of the Other to show how ideology is constructed in the urban geography of the Lower East Side. What are the connections between the stereotypes the young women identified in the *Makes Me Mad* project and historic representational practices situated in the Lower East Side? The

stereotypes clearly refer to historic racialized representations such as the jezebel, the mammie, and the matriarch (Collins, 2000). But they may also associated with discourses closer to home. Through an historical analysis I want to explore how representational practices “work” in a situated geographical context. My analysis considers for example, the connections between the stereotype ‘burden to society,’ and the familiar tropes of pathology which construct “the other half” as different and inferior. This is a way of preparing the groundwork for understanding how representational practices function in the contemporary gentrifying Lower East Side neighborhood. At the same time, my discussion gives a selected view of neighborhood transformation in order that contemporary changes can be situated within a broader historical context. As the history of the neighborhood is beyond the scope of this research (see Mele, 2000), instead I focus on particular historical moments that are relevant to my analysis of the relationship of representational practices and spatial production. (My discussion is informed by several sources, but I rely most heavily on Christopher Mele’s trenchant historical analysis of representations of the neighborhood in his book Selling the Lower East Side: Culture, Real Estate, and Resistance).

Representations of “the other” half

By 1910 more than a ½ million immigrants from Britain, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Italy had settled in the Lower East Side neighborhood making it the most densely populated area in the world at the time (Abu-Lughod, 1994). Most immigrants lived in tight quarters in substandard tenement housing. While the Lower East Side was home to the “economic lifeblood” of the growing city (Mele, 2000), it was represented by the middle and upper classes as a slum where dirty “foreigners” lived in overcrowded conditions leading to disease, promiscuity, and lack of family and moral

values. Representations of inferiority, criminality, and incivility served as explanations for the slum living conditions of the Lower East Side, in a discourse that emphasized cultural “ethnic” differences rather than class inequities and poverty (ibid). The representations deflected blame from landlords for exploitative conditions, focusing instead upon the “lazy work ethic” of tenants. Immigrant women were characterized as having “loose morals,” having too many kids, and unable to keep their house clean or control their kids (ibid).

How the Other Half Lives, the title of social reformer Jacob Riis's famous 1890 exposé of the overcrowded tenements of the Lower East Side, depicted the abysmal housing conditions of the immigrants. Instead of blaming the poor for their poverty, he called attention to the structural and social failures of society. His journalistic accounts and photographs had a powerful influence in garnering public support for legislation which had a significant impact on housing reforms.¹³ At the same time, Riis's writing reflects the pervasive and long-standing dominant representation of immigrant and the working class residents. Riis reinforced representations of the working poor as a dysfunctional, dirty, ‘promiscuous class’ and the ‘ghetto’ as a location of depraved values. In many ways, his work anticipates the tradition of urban social researchers who approach the ‘inner city’ as a static foreign culture and pathologize, criminalize, romanticize, and essentialize the other (Kelley, 1997).

Riis's work is rife with contradictions. While his work is a milestone in social reform and action research, revealing the power of research to effect social change, at the same time Riis engages stereotypes of the Other to strengthen his argument. This is similar to

¹³ Including the important Tenement Act of 1901 which significantly altered the form of the “dumbbell” tenements creating backyards instead of air shafts and provisions for the regulation of fire escape access, running water, and sanitation provisions (Mele, 2000)

the representational practices of the local social service organization that inspired the *Makes Me Mad* project in the first place. If on the one hand, Riis reproduced upper and middle class attitudes toward the poor, his writing also reveals another construction of the Other that is relevant to my analysis. In the tradition of social reformers Riis identifies the Other as in need of being saved and assimilated, and put on track to being a productive citizen.¹⁴ If this construction seems a more benign approach to the Other, suggesting the potential of social (and spatial) inclusion, it does not however disturb the unequal relations of power between Us and Them. In order to become one of Us the immigrant must assimilate, erasing the cultural distinctiveness which marks them as inferior and different. Assimilation involved not only “becoming American” but “becoming white,” in a process privileging upper class Anglo and Northern European culture in constructions of the ideal citizen (Brodin, 1999; Ignatiev, 1995; Ramos-Zayas, 2001). Success was represented geographically as an opportunity to escape the Lower East Side for a better life somewhere else like uptown or Brooklyn (Spewack, 1995). The young women researchers struggle with similar issues today in negotiating the contradictions between upward mobility and selling out (discussed further in chapter 4).

Untangling pathological representations and ghetto productions

“I have had kids tell me that my hair was so nappy it looked like a thousand Africans giving the Black Power salute, but never has anyone said to my face that my whole family—especially my mama—was a “tangle of pathology.” Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has been saying it since 1965. “ R.D.G. Kelley (Kelley, 1997, 2)

¹⁴ Mele explains that although the Lower East Side ghetto was considered a prototypical slum, it was also understood as an important space of assimilation. The Lower East Side was a place where the newly arrived could get a foothold in the new world and begin the process of assimilation, shedding one's old ways (Mele, 2000).

If “space and social behavior were interconnected to define the slum condition” at the turn of the century in immigrant Lower East Side (Mele, 2000, 131), this relationship was made even more explicit in the discourse of the “culture of poverty,” which proposed behavioral rather than structural determinants for poverty. As an explanation for the ‘ghetto’, the culture of poverty thesis deflected attention from issues of spatial and social segregation, housing problems, and exclusion from American political and economic life, and instead focused upon patriarchy, sexual immorality, and other social ‘deviances’. Still constructed as a location of depraved values, the Lower East Side ghetto in the 1950s and 60s was represented as home to “a tangle of pathologies,” only now the single mother is constructed as the crux of the problem: “at the heart of community breakdown, violence and poverty” (Briggs, 2002, 89).

Coined by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis, and made famous by Moynihan in his notorious report The Negro family: The case for national action (1965), theories of the culture of poverty were “part of a broader ideological thrust ...that displaced concern from such issues as unemployment and discrimination to family structure and gender roles” at the same time as the civil rights movement was challenging racial oppression, and the women’s movement challenged patriarchy (Mullings, 1994, 274). The Moynihan report was a policy document drawing upon a social science research produced for the Johnson Administration which attempted to address the ongoing economic and social disparities between Blacks and Whites in Northern cities. Its stated goal was “to bring the Negro American to full and equal sharing in the responsibilities and rewards of citizenship” and to enhance “the stability and resources of the Negro family” (Rainwater & Yancey, 1967, 6). While the Moynihan report identified “the roots of the problem” in slavery, it focused its policy analysis on “the tangle of pathology” which characterized the Negro community and their family structure (Ibid). In effect the Moynihan report blamed

the African American mother, identified as the “matriarch” for having too many children, failing “to defer gratification, and plan for the future” (Borchert, 1999, 585), demasculating and alienating her male partner and thus “perpetuating the cycle of poverty and deprivation” (Moynihan, 1965, 76). Oscar Lewis's best-selling book La Vida (1965), offered a similar perspective on the Puerto Rican family, which was characterized by absent fathers, hypersexual women, bad mothers, poor work habits, and violence (Briggs, 2002). In short, the discourse of the culture of poverty firmly established the relationship between pathological, racialized, and sexualized identifications of young woman of color and the construction (and production) of the ghetto which is relevant to the *Makes Me Mad* project.

Focusing upon individual behavior, culture of poverty theories projected anxieties about the radical transformation of the urban environment post World War 2 onto particular (black and brown) bodies. Notable changes included the emergence of New York City as a headquarters to multinational corporations, the suburbanization of the city's white middle-class residents, an influx of African American and Puerto Rican populations in Northern cities, and then, later the deindustrialisation of cities, and the concentration of poverty. After “the Great Migration” of African Americans who moved from southern rural areas to northern cities (starting in 1910), came the “Great Arrival” of Puerto Ricans (in the 1950s) who moved to urban areas, including the Lower East Side. The neighborhood was to become home to one of the largest Puerto Rican communities in the city, a satellite barrio to East Harlem, and the center of Puerto Rican cultural life (Maffi, 1994). The increase in Puerto Rican migration reflected the demand for low-wage labor and the recruitment on the part of the manufacturing industries, most notably the apparel industry. Similar to the waves of immigrants before them, were subject exploitative and discriminatory labor practices, always the “last hired first fired” in a shifting labor market

(Mele, 1994) The Puerto Rican migrants' progress was short-lived as a result of the decline of manufacturing employment. Between 1950 and 60, over one hundred thousand manufacturing positions were lost, many of these jobs in the apparel industries as the production was moved off shore, ironically to places like Puerto Rico (Mele, 2000, 127). Instead of the upward mobility, the Puerto Ricans became an excess labor force, in a "permanent condition of semi-poverty" (Mele, 2000, 128) which had significant ramifications for the neighborhood. Representations of poverty as the "Negro Problem" or the "Puerto Rican Problem," mediated the contradictions of capitalism and the unevenness of the much celebrated post war prosperity which was not shared by all.

Ironically, in the same period that marked the formal dismantling of American segregation in law and practice (for ex. *Brown v. Board of ed*), as thousands of black and white Americans marched against racism as part of the civil rights movement, the geography of apartheid (suburbia) both produced and reflected the material basis for structural racism. Post WW 2 spatial strategies reveal the contradictory positionings of the government social policy around race; declaring on the one hand the "War on Poverty" in the city, at the same time as it underwrote the expansion of suburbia, a massive investment in white privilege. Singh explains: "Even as the legal edifice of segregation was being dismantled by government decrees (beginning as early as the end of World War II), a much more enduring and pervasive structure of spatial apartheid was being inscribed in the social landscape—the divide between urban ghettos and suburban idyll" (Singh, 2000, 41). As Kelley points out: "segregation was not simply a mean system predicated upon fear of the Other but an elaborate racial political economy by which the creation of the modern "ghetto" and postwar suburbs were two sides of the same process" (Kelley, 1998).

The theories of the culture of poverty rationalized the glaring contradictions of uneven development exemplified by the contrast between suburban and urban environments, while redlining, restrictive covenants, and neighborhood improvement associations, enforced the color line (Aspen, 2004b; Hayden, 2003). Suburbanization can be understood as an effort, Singh argues, to make the “Negro problem,” and hence the “Negro” disappear” (Singh, 2000, 38). But if people of color were concentrated in urban ghettos, geographically far away from the white middle class communities, the spectacle of the Other was prominent in the media, embodied in the stereotypes of the pathological single Black mother who figured conspicuously in the discourses of the culture of poverty. She became a symbol of the great disparities in wealth characteristic of capitalism (Collins, 2000, 76). In this context, representations of the white suburban housewife tucked behind the white picket fence baking an apple pie for her husband when he comes home from work and the unwed poor urban single mother living in a tiny apartment with several children are mutually defining images that provide a basis for a set of beliefs at the intersection of race, class and gender (Mullings, 1994). This is similar to the dialectic of the at risk teenage mother and the young career woman as imagined in the popular TV show *Sex in the City*.

In the 1950s and 60s, the Lower East Side was not a segregated community in terms of black and white dichotomies. However, racial and ethnic differences within the neighborhood between the newer but increasing population of Puerto Ricans and the older white ‘ethnics’ of Jewish and eastern European descent fractured the social and physical landscape in keeping with the charged political climate of the period. In addition, a small percentage of African Americans moved into the newly constructed public housing developments. As Mele explains: “Segregation erased traditional bonds among Lower East Siders that historically transcended their ethnic and religious differences and

formed a basis of place identity and community attachments" (Mele, 2000, 133).

Although the boundaries were not always so distinct in everyday practice, the neighborhood became divided into territories along racial and ethnic lines, reflecting a polarized community marked by social isolation, alienation, and distrust (ibid). While the older white ethnic groups lived mostly west of Avenue A, and in certain areas below Houston Street, the recently arrived and growing Puerto Rican community staked out territory in the eastern areas of the neighborhood, which soon became known as Loisaida ("Spanglish" for Lower East Side). The Puerto Rican community moved into dilapidated tenements on Avenue C and D, much to the advantage of landlords who had trouble renting these substandard properties (who then subdivided apartments, increased the rent, and shortly thereafter dispensed with the upkeep) (Mele, 2002, 139). At the same time, the Puerto Ricans moved into the public housing developments that bounded Avenue D, representing the largest concentration of public housing below 96th Street (ibid, 108). The massive public housing developments were constructed beginning in the late 1940s and continuing through the 1960s as part of a Federal slum clearance policy much to the chagrin of private developers who had plans to transform the neighborhood into a middle and upper class community (Mele, 2000). Today, the public housing developments function as important anchors preserving the low-income character of the community despite gentrification pressures (Saegert et al., 2003).

By the 1960s, Loisaida had become one of the major "homelands" for Puerto Ricans in the US (East Harlem being another) (Aponte-Parés, 1998). "Homelands" is a term connected to the South African system of apartheid, used to designate areas where Blacks were restricted (Bell, 2001). According to Bell (2001), "homeland" identifies a particular historical geography, as communities transition, transform, and sometimes even disappear. In the 1960s Loisaida was a symbolic center of Puerto Rican, and later

Nuyorican, culture a hybrid political identification reflecting differentiation from the island. Within Loisaida, the Puerto Rican community established their own organizations, selected their own leaders, and appropriated and visibly reshaped the neighborhood spaces with bodegas, social clubs, and restaurants, reflecting and “representing” their shared cultural identity through “building and claiming enclaves that *looked like them*” (Aponte-Pares, 1998, 400). If ghettoization and the segregation of poor and working class people of color exacerbated economic exploitation through the concentration of poverty and substandard living conditions, Patricia Hill Collins suggests it also created a critical separate space for the development of oppositional knowledges critical to resisting racial oppression (2000, 9). The Loisaida community is a case in point, recognized as both a cultural mecca for the Puerto Rican diaspora and a center for political organizing (Maffi, 1994; Mele, 1994).

Significantly, although the poor white ethnics lived in the same impoverished circumstances, in falling down tenements just like their Puerto Rican and African American neighbors, the culture of poverty theories were not applied to them. Although in the 19th century, the ethnic groups were subjected to equivalent discourses which constructed them as the Other half. Instead post war poverty and social anxieties were projected onto the bodies of poor African-American and Puerto Rican young women of color who now represented the lowest rung of the social hierarchy. In addition to the obvious otherness of their race and culture, the newly arrived populations of color came from non-urban contexts and brought with them a very different approach to lifestyle. In some ways, the Puerto Ricans were obvious scapegoats as they were perceived as an economic threat as they had been recruited by industry to fill low-wage jobs. In addition to their ‘new kid on the block’ status, their arrival was followed by a tightening labor market and the deindustrialization of the city.

Stereotypes of young women of color as hypersexualized, pathological, and disorganized mediated the contradictions in capitalism and shouldered the responsibility for the poverty of their families and overall communities, in contrast to the post war economic boom. The discourse served to shift blame, identifying women of color's central position in the family as the cause of social class status instead of an outcome of racial oppression and poverty (Collins, 2000). The attention to representations of dysfunctional and pathological poor families set the tone for an emphasis upon family values three decades later that was to become central to conservative public policies and have significant ramifications on urban neighborhoods including the Lower East Side.

The underclass

"Behind crumbling walls lives a large group of people who are more intractable, more socially alien and more hostile than almost anyone had imagined. They are the unreachable: the American underclass." ("The American Underclass", Time Magazine, August 29, 1977).

If pathological images of young working class women of color in the 1960s rationalized the uneven social and spatial investment in race, representations of the underclass now justified the wholesale disinvestment in the city in the 1970s and the development of the post-industrial ghetto of the 1980s. The fictional welfare queen, made famous by Reagan as part of his 1980 presidential campaign platform, who allegedly ripped off \$150,000 from the government, using 80 aliases, 30 addresses, a dozen social security cards, and four fictional dead husbands (<http://www.huppi.com/kangaroo/L-welfarequeen.htm>), created public support for shrinking the government, cutting back in social services, and beginning to rollback welfare programs. The welfare queen was represented as a highly materialistic single mother married to, and dependent upon, the

state. In this vein, conservatives argued that the federally-funded AFDC and welfare programs “rewarded” single mothers who continued to have children, further entrenching them in poverty (Briggs, 2000). The massive federal and state subsidies of suburbia and corporate infrastructure notwithstanding, social services for the poor were now constructed not as rights, or even entitlements, but as rewards (Sanjek, 1998; Kelley, 1997).

In effect, single mothers were characterized by the stereotypes identified in the *Makes Me Mad* report, especially: “Lazy and on welfare” and a “Burden to society.” Patricia Hill Collins argues that in the wake of the civil rights movement which challenged economic and racial oppression, people of color were constructed as a drain on society because they had challenged economic exploitation and advocated for equal opportunity (2000, 78-9). It is in this context, she explains that women of color’s fertility was connected to the changing economy, their children considered a threat to economic stability (as opposed to the much celebrated “baby boom” of white suburbia). This was epitomized in the stereotype of the teenage mother, a young poor woman of color who was blamed not only for her own poverty and the poverty of her family, but now for economic problems of the entire country in 1970s. Young working class and poor urban women of color were symbolized as the anti-citizen and public enemy in the guise of the welfare queen that functioned as a counterpoint to the hard working (read white) American citizen (Singh, 2000).

The dismantling of the welfare state and cutback in social services was matched by the wholesale disinvestment in cities nationwide in the 1970s, and particularly in neighborhoods home primarily to people of color, neighborhoods like the Lower East Side. Global economic restructuring was marked by the “oil shocks,” the ongoing loss of

manufacturing jobs, and the shift to a service and financial economy. New York City, entrenched in fiscal crisis and teetering on bankruptcy, contracted municipal services unevenly in particular neighborhoods. Private investors followed suit. For example, the landlords of tenement buildings on the Lower East Side abandoned their investment, letting buildings deteriorate even more and not paying taxes. The greatest impact was felt by the Puerto Rican community who had recently moved into the decrepit already deteriorating buildings. At the same time, many Puerto Ricans moved into the nearby Jacob Riis and Lillian Wald housing developments, where by the 1990s over 4/5 of the inhabitants identified as Hispanic, mostly Puerto Rican (Mele, 1994).

At the same time that the Lower East Side neighborhood was abandoned, the city subsidized the corporate development of the business districts, job centers for white suburban commuters (Sanjek, 1998). City policies were characterized by disparity and inequality. One glaring example is the blatantly named policy 'planned shrinkage' which effectively limited, or in some extreme cases, suspended city services in targeted poor neighborhoods like the Lower East Side or South Bronx, while channeling funds into middle class (usually white) neighborhoods considered viable.¹⁵ Services cutback included the maintenance of public transportation, roads, police and fire stations, hospitals and schools. It has taken years to redress the damage done by policies of "benign neglect."¹⁶ The rationalization was disingenuous at best, suggesting that the people would move following the services was not a realistic consideration for working class and poor residents who were just getting by as it was. So it followed that neighborhoods such as the Lower East Side were "left to die" or literally burn, as some

¹⁵ 'Triage' was another name given to this approach to city planning. It refers to medical terminology used in a crisis, in which resources are not wasted caring for someone who is about to die but instead focused on saving the person who has a chance to survive, became an approach to urban policy and development (N. Smith, personal communication, July 24, 2002).

landlords set fire to their properties 'milking' the remaining profits from their insurance policies. Today, over 70 community gardens some under threat of development, are a testament to the geography of disinvestment on the Lower East Side.¹⁷ The gardens were created on the rubble of falling down abandoned tenement buildings, leaving uninhabited shells of buildings which had transformed the neighborhood into the look of a bombed out city likened to war torn cities such as Beirut. If one considers the impact of disinvestment on the scale of the block, the gaps in the street front like missing teeth, one can imagine what this would do to the integrity of the community. Mele identified that over half of the private apartments East of Avenue B disappeared between 1970 and 1980, and that 57 percent of those living in private residences in Loisaída were displaced (Mele, 2000, 195; 1994). In the end, the private and public disinvestment in real estate over the course of a decade devastated the neighborhood. Mele explains that at the same time that the neighborhood declined an underground drug economy and other informal economies took over the neighborhood's abandoned properties. For the residents who stayed in the neighborhood their quality of life was severely compromised. This is the context for the childhoods of the young women who grew up in the Lower East Side.

The racialized overtones of representations of 'the 'urban jungle' and 'the inner city,' displaced race onto decline and reinforced an 'intractable' distance surrounding the poor (Time, 1977; Kennedy, 2000). Luis Aponte-Parés argues that market forces produced "a lumpengeography of capital, "reserved" neighborhoods with arrested development potential analogous to the industrial reserve of workers" (1995,11-12). The failure of the new economy to integrate the displaced and underemployed contributed to the growing

¹⁶ One might argue that the public education system has never quite recovered; or that current forms of planned shrinkage targets public institutions such as schools.

informal economy. In the 1970s and 80s disinvested neighborhoods such as the Lower East Side were marked by “an increased presence of street vendors, illegal sweatshops, and an assortment of unregulated jobs accompanied by squatters, cardboard condos or “Bushvilles”¹⁶, and casitas, the new alternative informal urban landscapes of the post-industrial city” (ibid). The abandoned Lower East Side neighborhood reproduced the third world vernacular of favelas and shanties in the “global city” of New York. Tracing the “development of underdevelopment,” Kristin Koptiuch traced the growing similarities between the inner cities of the first and third world, in a process she identified as “third-worlding at home” (1991). Third-worlding, “a name, a representation, not a place” refers to “the effects of a process of exploitative incorporation and hegemonic domination—and its fierce contestation by subjugated peoples—that used to take place at a safe, reassuring distance”(1991, 85).

Katz (2001, 2004) locates this process geographically, arguing that contour lines of uneven development, racial oppression, and exploitation create countertopographies of economic restructuring. In a similar fashion, Singh (2000) notes how the Black Panthers identified the ghetto as an “internal colony” to draw attention to its similarities with imperialist practices around the world. The geopolitical significance of the ‘internal colony’ is especially pertinent for Puerto Rican “colonial citizens,” whose diasporic experience has been marked by involuntary resettlement, rupture, conditions of poverty, and border-crossing (Aponte-Parés, 1995).

Representations of the ambiguously defined “underclass” symbolize the urban dystopia of the 1970s and 80s, and are still referenced today. On the one hand, the underclass is

¹⁷ One result of landlord abandonment was that the city inherited an enormous amount of *in rem* housing properties which they had no plan to deal with.

a shorthand referencing the segregation and concentrated poverty of the post industrial ghetto (Wilson, 1987; Vergara, 1995). On the other hand, the underclass is a trope of anti-social behaviors combining race, class, gender, and behavior, embodied by players in the informal economy -- drug dealers, unwed young mothers, and criminals (Kelley, 1997; Kennedy, 2000). The underclass came to national attention in a 1977 Time Magazine cover story (Time, 1977) which represented poor urban people of color as distinctly different and distant from white America (as exemplified by the introductory quote). By the 1980s and 90s the over-determined metaphor of the underclass conflating assumptions of race and poverty had become part of the public discourse (Kennedy, 2000). If the culture of poverty discourse focuses upon behavior of the urban poor as an explanation for their poverty and a justification for segregation, the underclass discourse argues that bad behavior and poverty is the outcome of a bad environment (Kelley, 1997, 18 & 182). In short, representations of the underclass assume a deterministic understanding of the environment in which at risk behaviors are produced in the ghetto. While representations of the underclass serves to differentiate between increasingly bottom-heavy class hierarchies while propping up the middle class, it also lumps together behavior, culture, poverty, and geography in a racialized interpretative frame which condemns the poor as undeserving others.

The neoliberal context and gentrification

Throughout history, structural inequities and social injustice are connected to the ways subjects are identified. As Omi and Winant argue (2002, 131): "hegemony operates by simultaneously structuring and signifying." This is no different in a contemporary

¹⁸ Referring to the first President Bush.

neoliberal context. In fact, the discourses that are mobilized today reference historical representations and the pain and struggle connected with particular historical geographies. The stereotypes are powerful in part because of their familiarity, referencing historic racialized and sexualized representations from the jezebel and to the matriarch. It doesn't take a stretch of the imagination to make the connections between the historically situated representations of the primitive, backwards Other in need of being saved and assimilated, reformed and the contemporary stereotypes of young women at risk who are targets of reform and public scrutiny.

My analysis will explore the particular meanings attached to representations of young working class women of color in the gentrifying/disinvested context of the Lower East Side with reference to the problems of structural racism and white privilege identified by DuBois and Wright at the beginning of the chapter. I look at how discourse functions as a mechanism of social control that is both symbolic and material, managed through state policies and processes of self-discipline. In my discussion, I map discourses of risk on the gentrifying geography of the Lower East Side, while considering how representations of the underclass cut both ways, justifying both disinvestment and reinvestment at the expense of young working class women of color who live there.

As we have seen, processes of contemporary capitalist globalism represent a shift from an industrialized Fordist economy based around manufacturing, strong centralized government, and the liberal welfare state. These shifts have had a profound impact on the occupational structure and spatial organization of the urban environment. The dislocations associated with transnational capitalism are well documented, as industries relocate "off shore" to capitalize on cheaper labor costs and the lack of regulation, leaving the unemployed deskilled and marooned (Katz, 2004; Soja, 1989; Black, 2001;

Sassen, 1998; Castells, 1989). The disinvestments and resulting urban decline previously discussed bear witness to the uneven effects of global restructuring at the urban scale. New York is a “paradigmatic global city,” a marketplace of global finance and corporate headquarters for global capitalism and also home to poor and working class people of color whose exploitation contributes to the success of the new economy (Lipman, 2002).

This is nothing new. As witnessed in our historical analysis, economic urban restructuring is “marked by extreme bifurcations of wealth and poverty, dramatic realignments of class relations, and dependence on new streams of immigrant labor” (Smith, 2002, 430). In short, New York is a “dual city” expressing the contradictions of capitalism, the symbolic and social boundaries between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ (Lipman, 2002). What is distinct, however, are the discourses and representational practices which justify social inequities and produce new subject positions such as the welfare queen and the teen mom. New too, is the geography of neoliberalism which is still reflective of social inequalities, but reveals new forms of segregation and dislocation. What this means for young working class people --and young working class women of color in particular --growing up in the wake of urban disinvestments and abandonment, and now in the throes of neoliberalism, is not as well understood (Katz, 2004; Lipman, 2002, 2003). If gentrification is “the new urban form of globalization,” as Neil Smith argues (2002), then its analysis is critical to our understanding of how neoliberalism reconfigures the urban scale and the everyday lives of young working class women of color.

The expansion of the communications, technology and service industry, has created a polarized labor force stratified by race, class and gender. Just as global capitalism is

now imagined as a “space of flows”, its fluidity celebrated as it circulates globally unimpeded in a free market, hallmarks of the new labor force are flexibility and the ability to perform “just in time,” accommodating shifting schedules (Castells, 1989; Soja, 1989). Free to pick up and go, like capital, the ideal worker/citizen is mobile, unencumbered by commitments to people or particular places (Katz, 2004; Harris, 2004). By contrast, responsibilities to home and context is economically devalued in a global economy and produced as ‘failure’, for those who are “stuck in place” (Katz, 1998a). However, those who ‘fail’ are necessary to a segmented labor force that depends on unskilled and semi-skilled workers for ‘flexible’ positions to perform the poorly paid, part-time, short-term contractual work in the growing service sector (Ehrenreich, 2001). The lowest wage earners are women, people of color, and immigrants who now have to work several jobs at once to make ends meet (Castells, 1996; Sanjek, 1998).

Linda McDowell (2004) argues that the requirements of the new labor force coincide with constructions of femininity. She suggests that young women in particular, as opposed to young men, are sought after for positions in the service economy that demand a docile, deferential and ‘feminine’ laborer, who is able to deliver ‘service with a smile’ and present a “neat, clean, servile body.” This dovetails with Anita Harris’s proposition that young women embody the new economy (2004). My analysis considers the underbelly of this production, how young working class women of color growing up in stigmatized impoverished communities are constructed as “at risk” economic failures who at the same time fulfill particular positions in the labor hierarchy.

Characterized by deregulation and privatization, neoliberalism entails a retreat from the social wage and a shrinking of “the public”. While working class communities have to work much harder, there is less stability and security. The representation of the welfare

queen in 1980 harkened the dismantling of the welfare state accomplished most notably by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

Guarantees to what were once considered social rights to decent shelter and a good education have been reneged. In this context state responsibilities are downscaled to the body. The individual is now accountable for getting educated in disinvested schools, to pay the increasing rent with multiple minimum wage jobs, and to be able to stay healthy without health insurance. Harris explains "Economic security is no longer an inherent right that individuals can expect the state to protect, but a personal concern that should be handled without external intervention. Further, one's entitlement to citizenship is implicitly dependent on the capacity to secure a livelihood. ...A significant shift in the meaning of citizenship has taken place in terms of the expectations placed on individual themselves to activate their responsibilities rather than merely have their rights protected" (2004a, 65). The neoliberal discourse of "personal responsibility" coincides with global economic restructuring, the transfer of state supports to the private provision of services, dramatic shifts in the labor force, and new conceptualizations of citizenship. We shall consider how this discourse informs representations of young working class women of color and is spatialized in the gentrifying Lower East Side.

Gentrification

Gentrification is a transformative process of neighborhood change based on the influx of private capital and higher income residents (Smith, 1996; Slater et al, 2004). Alternately characterized as an "invasion" of the middle-class or higher-income groups in previously working-class neighborhoods (Glass, 1964; Hamnett, 1984), and as a process of 'refurbishment' or 'conversion,' gentrification is a physical, social, and economic process of 'upscaling' associated with the displacement of existing residents (Slater,

Gentrification web": <http://members.lycos.co.uk/gentrification>, retrieved January 16, 2005). On the Lower East Side, this takes shape in the form of upscale housing, small 'bohemian' retail outlets, and a proliferation of expensive restaurants and chic bars. The corner bodega is replaced by a wine bar, the 99cent store by a designer boutique. The new urban gentry is typified by a white young urban professional (disparagingly referred to as a yuppie), who works in a highly paid position in the communications industry (the other end of the service economy), is single and without children, and has disposable income. Most significantly, the middle and upper class newcomers are characterized by their consumer lifestyles (see Mele, 2000 for a discussion of the East Village a place for consumption).

While gentrification is defined primarily along dimensions of class, race is clearly a significant factor in some neighborhoods including the Lower East Side, where gentrification is often equated with a "whitening" of the neighborhood. From this perspective white people are identified as "the embodiment of rapid urban change" (Ramos-Zayas, 2001; Patillo-McCoy, 1999) and portend displacement as highly educated and highly paid, 'different' (usually white) people replace existing Latino and African-American residents and transform the neighborhood culture (Wilson et al., 2004; Wyly & Hammel; 2004; Betancur, 2002; Ramos-Zayas, 2001; Alicea; 2001; Mele, 2000; Smith, 1996). For example, in a recent study of gentrification in New York City, quantitative indicators included not only an increase in average monthly rent; but also an increase in the white population, educational attainment, and median income, overall summarized as a relative increase in socioeconomic status (Freeman & Braconi, 2004).

The geography of gentrification is deceptive. If in quantitative terms the demographic changes associated with gentrification might look like the integration of previously

segregated (Freeman & Braconi, 2004), separate and unequal spaces that characterize American cities, qualitative analysis suggests the contrary. A closer look reveals a new, different form of segregation, akin to what Bobo, Kluegel and Smith (1997) identify as “laissez-faire racism,” or free market racism, distinguishing it from the overt bigotry of the Jim Crow era. While not as clearcut as the contours of segregation ‘drawn’ by planners, city officials, and banks in the forms of redlining and neighborhood covenants (Massey & Denton,...), gentrification is nevertheless a very visible process although its geography is more complex (Wyly & Hammel, 2004; Smith & Difilippis, 1999; Goldberg, 1998; Smith, 1996). The boundaries are drawn point to point in the ‘new urban frontier’, from new condo, to deregulated housing, to a threatened community garden. Swathes of investment and wedges of privatization are straddled by disinvestment, a hip boutique next to a falling apart playground, a trendy new restaurant next to a dilapidated tenement building, across the street from a crumbling public school.

The gentrification of the Lower East Side is a long, slow, “messy, fleshy” (Katz, 2001, 711), inchoate process, more accurately described as *gentrifying* and disinvested (rather than using the past tense: ‘gentrified,’ suggesting completion). In fact, the young women researchers, all born after 1980, have grown up in the material conditions of disinvestment/ gentrification, a shifting process that has proceeded in fits and starts over the course of their lives in the wake of state and private abandonment of the 1970s (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Smith & Difilippis, 1999).¹⁹ As their neighborhood has transformed, they have remained in place, “grounded” in disinvestment, as Cindi Katz suggests (2004, 163) giving “new meaning to the term, long associated with punishment.”

¹⁹ As Smith et al. points out (1994), disinvestment creates conditions ripe for profit, and therefore should be understood as a critical component of the gentrification process.

Even if the borderline is not so defined, zig-zagging through the neighborhood, the demarcation between the structural disadvantage and privilege reveals itself to be distinguished along the lines of public and private. The public may be defined as the institutions regulated by the state including schools, hospitals, public housing developments, or even public spaces. Included in this definition are state or community protections such as housing regulations which maintain affordable housing, limited-equity co-operatives, or land trusts. Or the public may take the shape of those organizations whose mission it is to serve the general public including the health clinics, social service organizations, and youth centers. The private is defined by its exclusivity. This may take the shape of upscale restaurants which only cater to a minority, deregulated housing which serve selected upscale audiences, or private development that is not accountable to the needs of the community. Unlike the Jim Crow segregation which identified unmistakable boundaries between Black and White, or the apartheid geography of suburbia and the ghetto separated by space, time, and urban infrastructure, gentrification is a diffuse process of class and race stratification. It is characterized by a shifting 'frontier line' of social and spatial exclusion which is clearly visible to the long time residents, even if newcomers are sometimes oblivious of the geography of inequality that divides their neighborhood (see chapter 4 for more discussion).

The gentrifying context of the Lower East Side could be compared to tracking in supposedly de-segregated schools, where the smaller gifted and talented programs have more resources, better teachers, and "better" students (who are often whiter and wealthier), while the rest of the school contains overcrowded classrooms with lower expectations. In fact, the white return (as opposed to the white flight) to the

neighborhood has not translated into better schools or more job opportunities for the working class communities of color as some scholars had hoped it would (Patillo-McCoy, 1999). If the streets seem safer in a gentrified neighborhood, this is paralleled by an increase in the surveillance and incarceration of young people of color, particularly males in the community (Lipman, 2003; Parenti, 1999). In gentrifying communities, the working class continue to bear the burden of poverty disproportionately and resources are unequally distributed.

"Integration is not just putting bodies next to each other," Sonia Sanchez reminds us (2004), or living next door to each other. It does not involve "creating racial harmony without a fundamental transformation of the social and economic order," in other words sharing power (Kelley, 1998). By contrast, the urban geography of the Lower East Side is a highly differentiated, striated landscape (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), parceled into exclusionary spaces of investment packaged for a "new and improved" audience, while the leftover spaces of the "ghetto" are inhabited by longtime residents who are slowly but surely being pushed out by landlords and eroding state protections.

One of the chief concerns associated with gentrification is the displacement of the long time working class communities. However, compared with the urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 60s which evacuated tens of thousands of mostly African American residents from their neighborhoods (Fullilove, 2004), the displacement associated with gentrification is a much more piecemeal affair. Slowly, taking place over years, as long time residents move, are harassed, or die out, they are replaced by newcomers who one by one shift the neighborhood demographics. One effect of this iterative drawn out process of gentrification has been that it is much more difficult to challenge this diffuse and dispersed process (Foucault, 1975). Although there have been strong anti-

gentrification movements in many places, including the Lower East Side, their fleeting victories pale in comparison to the strength of market forces (Smith, 2002). In addition, as part of a broader process of global economic restructuring, gentrification is but one front of multiple. At the same time that rents steadily increase, jobs are also scarce, rent controls are deregulated, affirmative action programs rolled back, and public schools are disinvested. In this context, gentrification is often experienced in personal terms, as an individualized problem of not being able to get a good job and pay the rent, rather than as a community-wide issue.

Even if residents of gentrifying neighborhoods are not being displaced in the massive numbers witnessed during urban renewal, the threat of displacement is palpable. In order to remain in their neighborhood disadvantaged households living below the poverty line are paying a substantial portion of their income, 61% in average rent burden (Freeman & Braconi, 2004). In addition, in NYC the rents for unregulated apartments increased by an average of 43%, between 1996 and 1999 (ibid). Some residents are doubling or even tripling up in overcrowded apartments in order to deal with the increased costs of living in the Lower East Side. While this reflects the lack of affordable housing city-wide, it is also testimony to residents wanting to stay rooted in the community, to their place-attachment to the neighborhood.

There are several reasons why Lower East Side residents might pay more to stay in their neighborhood. After years of weathering the difficulties of landlord abandonment and extreme disinvestment, long time residents may be reluctant leave behind a place they have worked hard to improve. Not to be underestimated is the significance of social networks developed over time, the interconnections of friends, families, and experiences that not only inform self-identification, but may also be critical to the provision of child

care and family (Stack, 1975; Fullilove, 2004). Perhaps most importantly, the Loisaida neighborhood was a historic space where Puerto Rican's had "formed community consciousness," a place that the Puerto Rican community had built and transformed to reflect and represent their culture (Aponte-Parés, 1998). It was a symbolic home for the Puerto Rican diaspora. Gentrification threatens to erase this cultural heritage.

The exclusion of young working class women of color

If gentrification is defined as the "conversion into a more affluent middle-class neighborhood .. resulting in increased property values and in displacement of the poor" (Slater, Gentrification web: <http://members.lycos.co.uk/gentrification>, retrieved January 16, 2005), then its success depends upon the removal of young working class women of color and their families from the Lower East Side. Representations play a critical role in this process. Racialized stereotypes referencing the tangle of pathologies and the underclass serve to "place" young working class women of color in the 'inner city,' a location constructed in the American imaginary in the shape of a teenage mother, gang violence, homeless people, and other vestiges of urban decline and structural inequities (Breitbart & Pader, 1995). The 'ghetto' is projected onto the body of the young working class woman of color, which functions as a site of accumulation, loaded with historical representations. Just as whites have historically accumulated white privilege, people of color have historically accumulated disadvantage (Aspen, 2004b). Her body becomes a focal point for public discourse about disinvestment in the public sector and social anxieties about the new economy. The raced and classed representations of young working class women of color exemplify what Bobo et al. (1997) identify as "laissez-faire racism," reflecting the contradictions of the new political economy where on the one hand the state advocates for antidiscrimination and color blind public policies. And on

the other, structural economic disparities in labor, housing, and status reflect and produce raced and classed inequities.

But just as gentrification is made possible by a disinvestment in real estate (Smith et al., 1994), deficit representations of young working class women of color as a “burden to society” can also generate ‘value.’ As Melissa Wright argues: “as with any process of devaluation, there is value still to be gained from her, if her image as value’s antithesis can be put into motion towards the production of more value.... By representing what value is not, she establishes the contours for what value is. In her opposition, therefore, we find value’s positive condition. And following this logic, we find progress in the places where she once worked, in the spaces she once occupied, in the city she once inhabited” (Wright, 2004, 371). Similarly, on the Lower East Side, the ‘upscaling’ of the neighborhood involves scrubbing “clean the working class history and geography... its class and race contours rubbed smooth” (Smith, 1996, 26-27), rendering invisible traces of the community established by the families of the young women. Aligned with the disinvestment of the ‘ghetto,’ the social and spatial exclusion of young women becomes necessary for the improvement of the neighborhood. In their place new establishments catering to young, trendy twenty-something years olds with disposable incomes reflect the shifting resident base of the neighborhood. Their presence marks prosperity, just as the absence of young working class women of color does too.

Key to the devaluation of young working class women of color is her designation of “at risk.” The discourse of risk works on several levels, capitalizing on its ambiguity and multivalence. While the term ‘at risk’ is unclear, it is geographically specific in its reference to poor and working class young people of color living in the ‘inner city’ (a racially coded term for disinvested, urban communities of color marking it in contrast to

the “vanilla suburbs” which ring the city). Referring to behavioral attributes even as it very obviously connotes economic implications, risk reaffirms the neoliberal discourse of personal responsibility while erasing structural inequities (Harris, 2004). From this perspective, discourses of risk are a way of placing blame on young people of color who live in disinvested circumstances, who expose the unequal distribution of resources and resulting social inequities. Because of their understandable difficulty succeeding, young people of color threaten the dominant American ideologies of meritocracy and equal opportunity and are therefore labeled “at risk.” Anita Harris explains (2004, 25) that while the identification of risk is intended to alert authorities to young people’s potential difficulties, at the same time the discourse produces them as failures, “structural disadvantage is recast as poor personal choices, laziness, and incompetent family practices.” The ‘at risk’ framework focuses on improving attitudes and competencies rather than structural or material conditions.

If it operates in a similar fashion to representations of the underclass or the culture of poverty thesis in terms of conflating behavioral and economic characteristics, the discourse of risk reveals not only an overwhelming individual responsibility, but also surveillance. The identification of “at risk” marks ‘inner city’ youth who are closely monitored by state authorities, within spaces of school, work, the public, and even the home (in the new public housing regulations). The ideological force of risk discursively constructs African–American and Latino youth as in need of control and regulation. Programs and policies that serve to reform and discipline young people of color set on track those who comply to be productive citizens, and push those who do not outside the boundaries of the public sphere (Lipman, 2002, 407). Like the 19th century reformers who required the Other to assimilate to become like Us (and less like Them), the at risk designation is framed within the discourse of improvement and reform. For young urban

working class women of color this can be both an external pressure from the outside and an articulated desire to achieve one's goals. External demands may take the shape of educational standards, programmatic strategies, and public policies (as in the case of welfare reform) demanding and enforcing change to suit political and economic agendas and new requirements of citizenship. Assimilation and the reforms associated with at risk are both presented in the guise of upward mobility as what's needed to attain the "good life." Implicated is an ideal held up as normative and as the measure of development or success -something to strive for. However, what is constructed as 'ideal' depends upon the particular context, defined by current economic and social imperatives, reflecting hegemonic standards defined by privileges usually associated with intersections of wealth, whiteness, heterosexuality, and masculinity.

In the current neoliberal economic context, Anita Harris (2004) argues that the flexibility and adaptability of the individual is one of the hallmarks of the new conceptions of citizenship. Unattached, confident, and self-made, the ideal young woman puts a premium on personal responsibility. Held up as attainable for everyone through personal effort, application and good choices, the fiction of success masks the underlying privilege (Ibid). Unlike representations of assimilation, implied in the discourse of risk is exclusion. Whereas assimilation suggests the possibility of inclusion, of becoming one of Us, the discourses of risk are not so optimistic. At risk suggests not belonging. What's more, it implies the dangerous Other who puts Us in jeopardy.

There are economic consequences to the 'risky' behaviors which young working class women of color are allegedly at risk for which include among others, sex, recreational drug use, petty crime, and dropping out of school (related to stereotypes such as 'promiscuous'; 'likely to become teen moms'; 'delinquent'; 'out of control', and

'uneducated'). If risk refers to the probability of a young working class woman of color's own personal economic failure, it also intimates her failure to become a productive contributing citizen. She is constructed as a risk to society—or as the stereotype stickers state—"a burden to society". From this perspective, to invest in her is a calculated risk. But while "at risk" young working class women of color are constructed as a threat to the new economy, they are also in danger of being excluded from it.

Similarly, at the neighborhood scale, young working class women of color are identified as either 'a danger' to their communities or in need of being saved from their dangerous neighborhoods (Sutton, 2004), or both. The investment in her neighborhood, the 'inner city,' once was also flagged as a financial risk as reflected in the redlining of poor communities of color. But now in the context of gentrification, the greenlining of previously disinvested neighborhoods, the 'ghetto' and related risks are projected onto the bodies of young working class women of color, and therefore threaten her exclusion, marking her as not belonging in the new and improved neighborhood.

Representations of risk do not only remind young women of the threat of social and spatial exclusion, they also function as threats that discipline through 'spectacle' (Foucault, 1975; Lipman, 2003). Critical to the spectacle is 'the observation of the few by the many' (Lipman, 2003); young women are framed by the 'subjectifying gaze' which identifies them within the discourse of risk (Hall, 1997c). The stereotypes constitute a public display of the potential and probable failure of young working class women of color. The spectacle operates through a "complex inter-play between presence (what you see, the visible) and absence (what you can't see, what has displaced it within the frame)" (Hall, 1997c, 59). Stuart Hall argues that representations operate as much through what is not shown, as through what is. Most problematic is not just that images

of the underclass are false or exaggerated, but that they obscure structural injustices. Masked in the static representations of young women are the fluid, complex, and layered realities of their everyday lives. While examples of 'the silent but invisible majority' (Fine & Burns, 2003) of young women who stay in school, who are hardworking, who don't have children are readily apparent if one only looks, the cardboard cut outs of the underclass figure prominently in the public imagination. In the 21st century the public 'spectacle' is circulated widely in new information technologies and forms of mass communication. The public humiliation of the teenage mother or the high school drop out serves as a warning to others near and far in a topography linking young women across the nation living in the material conditions of disinvestment. The "at risk" designation is thus a disciplining technology, in which young women are 'subject' themselves (Hall, 1997c), and are expected to participate regulating themselves through the "right" choices (Harris, 2004a, 2) (to be discussed in the next chapter).

Just as young working class women of color are surveilled and regulated, so is their neighborhood. Some scholars suggest that it is not necessarily that young people of color engage in so called 'risky' behavior more than their white counterparts, but that they are more 'at risk' for being caught in neighborhoods under surveillance by the police like the Lower East Side. And certainly young people of color are more at risk for being punished by the state if caught, as demonstrated by the high incarceration rates of young men of color in particular (Fine et al., 2002).

Neil Smith argues that the rhetoric of the "urban frontier" rationalizes gentrification and related displacements as a "taming of the city," which is likened to the wild wild west. The frontier line of gentrification is defined in both political and economic terms. From an economic perspective, the frontier represents the fine line between investment and

disinvestment which has advanced in waves, moving east towards Avenue D.²⁰

Politically, the frontier is a discursive framework, in which the control, surveillance, and disciplining of poor, minority, working class families is constructed as necessary, and their exclusion as natural and inevitable in terms of financial profit and urban progress.

Smith identifies the spatial politics of gentrification as part of a “revanchist antiurbanism,” representing the white middle class not only “taking back the city” but also a spatial manifestation of the “race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling –class whites” and a vengeful “reaction against the supposed theft of the city... cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security” (Smith, 1996, 211). The revanchism is also articulated by the state who plays a critical role in securing and patrolling the new urban gentry’s claim to the city. The shift in urban public policy is expressed by “zero tolerance” policing strategies which reflect a new extreme in urban social control disciplining the disorder of the city and paving the way for gentrification. “Quality of Life” public policy initiatives developed in the early 1990s which tightly regulated street behavior, were made famous by New York’s Mayor Giuliani (1993-2001) because of his aggressive implementation in gentrifying neighborhoods like the Lower East Side. In the name of making the city safe and clean, quality of life policies in effect sought to eliminate the presence of social problems which took shape in the bodies of homeless people or young poor people of color who, with few places to go, spend time in public space and threatened the reinvestment of the neighborhood (Mitchell, 2002).

Not surprisingly, gentrifying communities like the Lower East Side are characterized by strained relations between the community members of color and the police, increased

²⁰ Although now Smith and DeFillipis (1999) argue that the frontier is a less accurate portrayal, as gentrification is now perhaps more a question of ‘infill’ as the public housing on Avenue D represents a

regulation, harassment, and brutality (Lipman, 2003, 335; Smith, 1996). On the Lower East Side the construction of a new police station on Avenue C in 1997 secured the 'frontier' of gentrification. Revealingly, the funding for its construction was provided by the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, making concrete the relationship between state regulation and gentrification (N. Smith, personal communication, July 24, 2002). In addition, the monitoring of the neighborhood is facilitated by the increase in privately and publicly owned surveillance cameras, which grew from 21 to 118 between 1998 and 2002, an estimated 500 percent increase (<http://www.notbored.org/lower-east-side.html>, retrieved February 3, 2005). Many of the new cameras are located in the public housing developments.

The conflicts with the police and protests over public space have brought critical attention to processes of gentrification in the scholarly literature and popular media. Notably absent from the gentrification literature is the role of young women, due in part perhaps to the invisibility of young working class women of color in their neighborhood spaces (even as their bodies are on public display). Saddled with responsibilities for the household and caretaking, young women are more likely to be at home than on the streets where they might be subject to the disciplinary actions of the state (like their brothers, cousins, or boyfriends). But this does not mean they are exempt from regulation, as I have tried to show in my analysis.

significant physical and social barrier to gentrification.

While much has been written about the urban dystopia, the 'militarization of urban space' and the 'urban panopticon,' designed 'to command, protect, socialize and dominate' and 'police social boundaries' at the expense of urban social integration (Davis, 1992, Soja, 1989). Little is understood about the less visible but more intimate forms of surveillance which regulate the everyday lives of young working class women of color and their families. In concert with the stepped up police force and electronic security systems which monitor gentrifying neighborhoods, representations of the underclass patrol the boundaries of social identities while scrutinizing young women's behavior. Like technologies of state surveillance and discipline, the discourses of risk which construct young working class women of color as 'a burden to society' and 'likely to become teen moms' play an important role in facilitating processes of gentrification and related displacements. Stereotypes which devalue young women justify and secure the new urban gentry's claim to their neighborhood. While the concerns, needs and everyday struggles of young working class women of color who negotiate a disinvested/gentrifying context are invisible, their bodies are hypervisible, taking form in the spectacle of the underclass. Through the complex interplay between presence and absence, between what is not seen and what is put on public display, the stereotypes objectify young women, while at the same time erasing the complexities of their everyday lives.

Representations of risk serve therefore to not only threaten the spatial and social exclusion of young working class women of color, but make it seem inevitable as if she was destined to fail through making bad choices or engaging in irresponsible behavior. This discourse produces through stereotypes of young women of color a form of racialized, gendered, classed knowledge that is implicated in operations of power. This is what Foucault identified as "power/knowledge," which regulates behavior through the apparatus and technologies of power. For example, the apparatus of young women at

risk includes discourses, institutions (school), urban development (what Foucault identifies as 'architectural arrangements'), regulations, laws, and social scientific statements (such as the culture of poverty thesis). An apparatus is "inscribed in the play of power, but it is also linked to certain co-ordinates of knowledge;" it consists of "strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, 194-6 cited in Hall, 1997c, 47).

The young women are not exempt. They too are caught up, even if not on equal terms, and 'subject' themselves within the discourse of risk (Hall, 1997b). To this end, Anita Harris argues that the government of young women takes place at the intersection of their private selves and the public sphere, "part of a broader reworking of the public/private split, in that as the public sphere diminishes, increased regulation occurs in the sphere of interiority" (2004, 125). Young women's interior spaces and privacy are monitored through the spectacle of risk and public scrutiny. If as Harris argues, (ibid, 126) "image and information have become important ways in which power is deployed in a late modern world" it is also critical in the formation of young women's subjectivities.

Pointing to young working class women of color as "the problem," the discursive construction of risk erases the ways in which structural racism and poverty maintains white privilege. My analysis has traced the shifting representations of young women living on the Lower East Side throughout history in order to better understand how ideology and space are mutually constituted. As we have seen this discourse is historically and spatially specific, "grounded" not only in disinvestment, but now in the reinvested Lower East Side. The stereotypes cut both ways. One the one hand, as part of the underclass discourse they justify the shrinking of the public, constructing young

women of color as the 'anticitizen', public enemy, blaming young women for their poverty. Now, in addition, the discourses of risk serve to threaten and discipline young women into 'docile bodies' who must regulate themselves through the "right choices" to attain financial security and stability. Young women are at risk in a neoliberal context of being pushed out of the 'circle of deservingness' (Fine, 2003), and also out of their neighborhood which is now up for grabs, sold (or rented) to the highest bidder. While it would seem as if the private market has control over the future of the neighborhood in terms of who lives here and who doesn't, representations play an important role in facilitating this process of appropriation. The stereotypes are critical in securing the consent of the public who witness the transformation of the community and accept the "social costs" of gentrification as inevitable (Atkinson, 2004), and even as a sign of progress. If the stereotypes of the underclass and risk travel widely, distributed and produced at national and even global scales, they are also viscerally local and experienced as intensely personal, as discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4.

Negotiating grit and glamour

For some reason I liked it better when no one knew our neighborhood. Now that people are trying to make a name for us we have to live up to the grittiness of the ghetto life on one side and the glamour of the club, café and boutique life on the other side. (Jasmine)

In this chapter I explore how young women negotiate processes of disinvestment and gentrification and at the same time construct their subjectivities. If subjectivity is “a way of understanding one’s relation to the world” (Weedon, 1987), the “world” of concern here is articulated at the neighborhood scale and experienced as viscerally personal and local. My analysis bridges the material and psychological in its focus upon the socio-spatial constitution of identities, considering how young women interpret and make sense of their experiences growing up on the Lower East Side. Building upon the insights of chapter 3, which demonstrated the role representations play in urban restructuring, this chapter considers how young women challenge, accommodate, and transform stereotypes. Discussion will focus on how young women individually negotiate, having to “live up to the grittiness of the ghetto life on one side” and “the glamour of the club, café and boutique life on the other side,” forging partial subjectivities, as they struggle between contradictory situated positions

To begin, I consider young women’s experience of growing up in a neighborhood in transition, focusing in particular on their experiences of disinvestment. Next, I consider how young women interpret the processes of gentrification, paying particular attention to issues of race and class. What does it mean to grow up in a neighborhood as it is transformed physically, culturally, economically, and socially? My analysis addresses the

pressures young working class women of color feel as their neighborhood transforms beneath their feet. In conclusion, I discuss the ambivalence young women express in their commitment to their neighborhood, exploring tensions between escape narratives and an 'ethic of care' (Gilligan, 1982).

Growing up in a changing neighborhood

I have lived in the same apartment from the moment of conception. I have watched my neighborhood go through 2 decades of change. From high crime rates to the beginning of pacifying gentrification and now facing the prospect of losing more of our low income housing altogether.

At the same time that the researchers have reached a critical age in terms of making decisions about their own future, they are witnessing the changes which are shaping the future of their neighborhood. All of the young women involved grew up in the neighborhood best characterized as "in transition." In 1988 at the time of the Tompkins Square "riots," a historic event in the history of gentrification, the researchers were aged 2 to 8. By the time they were teenagers in the mid to late 90s, just starting or finishing high school, Avenue A was almost completely gentrified and commercial establishments on Avenue B staked out the 'new urban frontier'. A block of community gardens was put up for auction for private development without community notification in 1995, the same year the police with riot gear and an armoured vehicle "stormed" the 13th Street squats. Despite the newsworthy events of gentrification in the form of police confrontations with housing activists or new restaurant openings, most of the researchers were cocooned from the long tendrils of gentrification, living on or east of Avenue B in disinvested sections of the neighborhood. Even though processes of gentrification have been at work in the Lower East Side neighborhood since the 1970s, it is only recently (since the

late 1990s) that its dramatic and transformative presence has been felt in “their” neighborhood.

What I think of when thinking of my neighborhood is Latin music and hip hop playing in the street. In the summer people hang out on the corner and in the park and what seems to be thousands of children running around playing in the street. Sprinklers on with the smell of BBQ in the distance. The icy man yelling icy’s coco and cherry, the ice cream truck music playing in the distance.

Jasmine’s description of her neighborhood brings to mind historic depictions of dynamic working class urban neighborhoods including the Lower East Side (Jacobs, 1961; Spewack, 1995). Here on a hot summer day everyone is out on the street; music blasting from big boom boxes or car stereos, ice cream cones melting, as older folks sit on hot park benches or on the stoop. It is an almost nostalgic image of ‘the public life’ whose loss around the country is bemoaned by urban critics, who express anxiety about the loss of diversity in the future city as witnessed already in the gentrified and regenerated neighborhoods and theme park downtowns (Smith, 2002; Sorkin, 1992; Davis, 1992). This loss is also expressed by the researchers whose affection for their old neighborhood has grown as they witness changes, as it is “becoming an unfamiliar place.” This however belies the difficulties at having grown up in an impoverished community which was the focus of most discussions about the neighborhood.

Disinvestment

For all of the young women their experience of growing up in a gentrifying/disinvested neighborhood foregrounds their personal negotiation of disinvestment. “Their neighborhood” is identified as the ‘ghetto,’ ‘the slums,’ or more colloquially as “Lowa,” “Da Lowa Deck” or “Da 6th Boro,” names given to their neighborhood by other young

people. Associated with growing up on the Lower East Side is not only a street smart awareness and a rough, tough attitude, but also a sense of pride at having 'survived it,' even transcending expectations making it into college or out of high school.

I am proud of my neighborhood in front of people never letting someone disrespect us (unless they live there too). But also am angry for the problems we have in our neighborhood. Many things bother me about where I've grown up, about the people, about the outcome of the people I grew up with.

The researchers are not sentimental about their neighborhood behind closed doors. Growing up on the Lower East Side is characterized by the experience of a "lack" due to disinvestment. In my analysis, first I discuss the material conditions of structural disadvantage from the young women's perspective. This provides a framework for a consideration of how young women interpret and make sense of their cumulative experiences of disinvestment growing up on the Lower East Side.

The experience of disinvestment is not monolithic. In their discussions, the young women articulate a nuanced understanding of what it means to grow up in an impoverished neighborhood. Growing up on the Lower East Side was not expressed in only negative terms. It was also home. For the young women, their neighborhood is a significant context for memories, new learning experiences, and relationships (Chawla, 1992). However, through the process of comparing personal experiences, the young women elaborated a critique of disinvestment which was at the same time an expression of self-worth. Together, they developed a structural analysis. This framework became a counterpoint to individual interpretations of their disadvantage where young women took personal responsibility for their lack. The young women shifted back and forth between these two positions.

A key “lack” expressed by the young women again and again was the lack of support and dearth of programs or places to go for young people, particularly for young women. For example, one researcher lamented “I am an interesting young woman who bores herself to delirium. Because there’s nothing to do. I’m bored. ...It’s like that I’m interesting is going to waste because I have nothing to do with it.” Using the language of waste, she brings to mind the metaphor of urban decay. Just as her neighborhood is disinvested, so is she. Echoing this perspective, another researcher suggests young women (here referring to young working class women of color) aren’t “getting attention. and what I mean by that is that they’re not thought of....they’re just not considered. There’s no space made. They’re not considered for anything at all. They’re not prepared for life. They’re just there,” expressing a profound sense of neglect and disregard. Practically invisible young women are not thought of or taken into account. Just as “there’s no space made” the young women are “just there.” Not asserting their presence or needs, the young women don’t take up space. Instead they are figuratively and literally ‘stuck in place,’ without a place, geographical metaphors which contrast with the mobility associated with success in the global economy.

The disinvestment creates a downward spiral that Annissa calls “the cycle”:

Number 1. The cycle. Like, when kids have nowhere to go they’re left with the option of staying home and doing nothing or hanging out at the nearest-- peer pressures for sex and drugs kick in. And they’re forced to make the decisions on their own and sometimes they make the wrong ones. This is when they fall into the stereotype of the pregnant teen-- the unemployed pot smoking drop out. All they need is attention! Or a challenge every now and then. The cycle of not having enough. So behaving like the stereotype and then not having enough again.

As part of the Makes Me Mad project the researchers drew connections between the lack of resources in their neighborhood and stereotypes of young urban women of color,

identifying the adverse consequences of disinvestment. In their report they categorize community building needs from a young woman's perspective into the areas of health, education, employment, housing, and finance (appendix 3). In effect, they look at how the material conditions of structural poverty have informed different settings of their everyday lives. In one example, the researchers consider the relationship between housing and school and underemployment for young people. They describe how the lack of employment options coupled with increasing rents leads to overcrowded homes where the rent is cobbled together by extended families, including young school-aged women who work after school and on the weekends. They suggest that not only do these pressures increase tensions in the apartment, but it is also not an ideal environment for studying. In this example the researchers consider the relationship between education and the housing market, in another they consider the "under-servicing" of urban youth in educational settings. They critique the low quality of public education, the lack of basic programs for literacy, attendance, and enrichment, and the under-funding of schools, public libraries and related programs. Taken as a whole the researchers paint a detailed portrait of disinvestment in the daily life of young women in order to shed light on the "background", "struggle", "challenges that young women face", and "the aspects of life that make this more complicated" (Rios-Moore et al., 2004). In so doing, the researchers call attention to how stereotypes are produced within a particular disinvested context based on their own lived experiences. There is much more to the story, as one researcher suggests:

Despite the perception that the projects are full of drug addicts, criminals, and welfare recipients, I have known my home to be full of kind, hard-working, struggling, giving and intelligent people. We have our share of people who have lost their way but for each one there is a story. That is one aspect of my neighborhood and community that I would like to relay to a visitor or newcomer to my home, which is that like any other place that people decide to create a life in, there are countless stories that belie whatever appearance the Lower East Side gives off.

Well aware of how the ghetto and the people who live there are often misconstrued by outsiders, and the deleterious effects this has had on the neighborhood in the form of underfunding of programs, the researchers ask rhetorically “is a funding stream likely to be invested in a community that is viewed as being self-destructive and negative? (Rios-Moore et al., 2004, 6), drawing attention to the cycle of the systemic denial. Tracing connections between representations and structural inequities in the *Makes Me Mad* project, the researchers explicitly address the dialectical relationship between disinvestment and stereotypes on the one hand, and the relationship between stereotypes and young women’s well-being on the other. The subtext of their research addresses the violence of poverty and its impact on the community and young women (Sharff, 1998).

While not explicitly addressed in the *Makes Me Mad* project, the researchers articulated the relationship between disinvestment and physical and state violence on their community in their ongoing discussions. Disinvestment is not only associated with violence, in terms of the higher crime rates associated with impoverished neighborhoods, it is also experienced as violence against poor and working class communities of color (Solis, 2003). In the first instance, the violence perpetrated within underprivileged communities is well documented. From time to time, the young women would share stories of acts of violence, as experienced by friends or family members, or that they had witnessed themselves. Violence was articulated as part of the neighborhood context which took the shape of not only physical acts of violence but hostility and aggressiveness between community members. Raising the rhetorical question “why aren’t we more considerate in a poor community?” one researcher addressed the trickle down effects of the violence of disinvestment which alienates

people from each other in an antagonistic context that is characterized by a scarcity of resources, and socio-economic disenfranchisement.

Poor and minority neighborhoods are also subject to violence, particularly those that are on the cusp of gentrification. Social boundaries are guarded by stepped up police forces who discipline young African American and Latino men who are constructed as dangerous and criminal. Relations between the police and communities of color are typically strained amid reports of police brutality and increased harassment (Lipman, 2003, 335; Parenti, 1999; Fine et al., 2003). For young working class women of color, the violence against and between the men and women in their communities is a critical concern, as is the growing prison industrial complex. These issues are expressed as part of a context of growing up in a “bad neighborhood” and a cycle of violence, the trickle down effects of disinvestment, which is also related to stereotypical representations of communities of color.

The violence of poverty was also articulated by the young women as a personal injustice. As Janderie explained: “the whole spirit of what we don’t have affects our inner being.” Disinvestment is interpreted as a betrayal, a public assault upon their character, and a lack of opportunity which stunts their growth. The young women express what Crosby et al. identify as a sense of “relative deprivation” (Crosby et al, 1986 cited in Fine et al., 2004c), an inconsistency between what the young women believe they deserve and what they receive, coupled with an awareness that “others” have what you do not. For young women growing up in a gentrifying neighborhood the sense of relative deprivation is heightened when the “other” lives in the new condo across the street (see section on whiteness below). The experience of privation contributes to a sense that

young women feel they are not worthy of public investment coupled with feelings of anger at what seem to them to be obvious social and economic inequities.

For those of who don't know the history we just see the results of the disinvestment. We just see the results of the degradation and all we feel is that crater and that we're just sinking deeper and deeper into it. And feel incredibly helpless and at the same time. You know like pissed off and not that you can't use your pissed offness in anyway."

Cumulative experiences of systematic material denial inform young women's feelings of shame, anger, and a lack of confidence in their capacity to effect change. This is reinforced by representations of risk which contribute to feelings of being out of control and living in a hostile territory. The stereotypes are reminders of young women's precarious social status. The prevalence of stereotypes in the public imagination thus evokes the fear of social and spatial exclusion through creating a state of insecurity and anxiety amongst young women and their communities (see Pain, 1991 for a discussion of how sexual harassment works in similar ways as a mechanism of social and spatial control).

In addition to the "dignity harms," the 'daily slights to humanity' of feeling "too black" or "too loud" and not belonging (Reitman, forthcoming), stereotypes serve as a form of surveillance where the behavior of "at risk" young women is scrutinized (as discussed in chapter 3). Young women participate 'subjecting' themselves to the discourse of risk, turning the gaze inwards. For example, in an analysis of one young woman's self-description, the researchers write: "she uses stereotypes to describe how she views herself and the way she thinks she is viewed from the outside" (Rios-Moore et al., 2004). Engaging the bi-furcated perspective of being the Other (Pratt, 1999), young women scrutinize and make sense of themselves through these representations. In this regard,

the disinvesting of space is not only about material resources, but about how agency is regulated.

For the young women, the violence of disinvestment is most insidious when they own or internalize the deprivation. In the *Makes Me Mad* report, the researchers argue that “too often young women take responsibility for failing institutions that underserve and undereducate them, leading to a personal sense of failure” (Rios-Moore et al., 2004).

While taking responsibility is laudable, feeling like the disinvested material conditions of their neighborhood are their fault contributes to a sense of shame and inadequacy.

Therein lies the alienation, and stigma attached to stereotypes and to growing up in their neighborhood. What’s more, the stereotypes are pervasive. Negative representations of young women of color are:

Out in the world being manufactured and emphasized in the media, music, magazines, etc., young womyn begin to see these stereotypes as they only options for projecting themselves and they become the axis around which everything revolves. Young womyn define themselves against and/or through stereotypes. (Rios-Moore et al., 2004, 5)

Not only do the young women know what it feels like to be stereotyped, they also acknowledge their own role in using or embracing stereotypes to explain their experiences of “lack” (as discussed further below). In so doing, they internalize the blame and humiliation attached to stereotypes. For example, researcher Erica Arenas shared, “Sometimes, as a defense mechanism, people will adopt stereotypes as their own. If you take the stereotype and make it yours then there is no way it can be used against you. When we do this sometimes we lose sight of the negativity in the stereotype and we begin to use these stereotypes as our excuses for why we are the way we are and why we do the things we do. For example: “Don’t make me get black up on here” or

"I'm Puerto Rican, I can't speak proper English." (Rios-Moore et al., 2004). This can contribute to a sense of diminished agency and self-destructive behavior in which stereotypes are "viewed as expectations of who we should be or who we will be" (ibid). The stereotypes are another face of disinvestment the young women are forced to confront and negotiate in their everyday lives. How they make sense of these deficit social constructions is intimately bound with how they understand their selves and their neighborhood.

Challenging culture of poverty discourses which blame poor people for their poverty, the young women articulated what might be identified as a "culture of disinvestment" in their research project. In effect, they offered a structural analysis that identified the adverse consequences of insufficient support: a lack of resources, and ongoing deprivation of their communities and themselves. The culture of disinvestment functioned as framework for re-thinking their individual interpretations of their neighborhood experiences.

"The system"

If gentrification is conceptualized primarily in real estate terms in the literature it is experienced and articulated by young women as 'of a piece.' In this regard, the disinvestment that precedes gentrification was discussed by the young women as part of a broader context of structural racism which includes the scarcity of jobs, poor quality of education, cut-backs in social services, assaults on the gains made through the civil rights movement, shortage of affordable housing, growth of the prison industrial complex, lack of financial security and support, and the fragmentation of communities

(Aspen, 2004b; Lipman, 2002). Stereotypical representations which discipline and control young women are located within a framework of historic and contemporary disenfranchisement based on intersections of race, class and gender. In their discussions of gentrification and disinvestment the young women drew connections between histories of discrimination and social inequities ranging from slavery to police brutality; from white privilege to the feeling invisible. If disinvestment is not a new experience for communities of color, the parallel geography of reinvestment side by side, was articulated by the researchers as part of a convergence of deepening inequalities that was demoralizing.

This all encompassing experience of discrimination, identified as “the system” or “the matrix” in the young women’s discussions, reflects the structural perspective the researchers developed in their collective analyses. The researchers in effect engaged what scholars identify as a structural racism framework to explain “the ongoing disadvantages associated with being a person of color “ on the one hand, related to “the ongoing advantages with being white” on the other (Aspen, 2004b). The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change defines structural racism as the ways in which history, public policies, institutional practices, and cultural stereotypes interact to maintain white privilege, racial hierarchies, and inequitable racialized group outcomes such as unemployment rates, high school drop out figures, or home ownership rates(Ibid). Structural racism is also therefore a process of class formation. Assigning agency to “the system” their experiences of being “set up to fail” was often identified by the researchers as an ambiguous “they.” Expressive of power, control, and privilege, “they” functions as a way for the women to name their own loss of agency. “They have the money. They push buttons and we just react to them. And we fall into place. Like the domino effect.”

CC: And who's they? Who's they?

Ruby: Society.

C: Who's society?

Annisia: People who are not us.

Ruby: That have the resources.

Annisia: Does that mean not of color? Without money? Although some people are of color and they have money –I don't understand. And probably not urban. I guess. Cause those are the people who misunderstand us. All the people with power.

In contrast to an omnipotent “they,” “us” is not only without power but marginalized from society. Key to the researchers articulation of their experiences of social inequities was the relationship between white privilege and the reproduction of disparate outcomes. In this regard, “they” was implicitly and sometimes explicitly identified as white. As one researcher explained “We live a harder life than they do. They created it. The rules are for them. They live the rules. Those rules are created against us and yet we have to live that way.” She expresses the fundamental connections between white privilege and others’ ongoing experiences of disadvantage within a structural framework (MacIntosh, 1989). For the researchers, this relationship is conveyed quite visibly in processes of gentrification:

While engaged in a deep discussion about what has become of the Lower East Side ... suddenly I hear one of girls say the word gentrification. I had never heard the word before in my life , so naturally I asked “what’s that mean?” She explains to me that these yuppie ass, money having, culture seeking, white people are buying us poor people out of our neighborhood in part because they want a taste of our culture rich environment and the more of them who come in, the more of us are forced to leave because we can longer afford to live here.

In short, gentrification is embodied by whiteness. Constructed as a threat of social and spatial exclusion, "the more of them who come in, the more of us are forced to leave," whiteness is the face of gentrification. In contrast with the presumed invisibility often associated with whiteness, here it is marked and conspicuous. As Jasmine wrote in her journal : "Racial differences in the neighborhood: white vs. everyone else" adding "our neighborhood needs a place to keep track of all the changes it goes through, to keep a record of what race lived here and when." From within the neighborhood it was difficult and even perplexing to make sense of the changes taking place over their lifetime. Learning the word gentrification, new for some researchers, named the transformations they had witnessed over time from the progressive whitening of the community to the new boutiques selling designer retro clothes. For others already familiar with the term, revisiting the multiple ways that gentrification had affected their well-being collectively as a community opened up a whole new way of seeing their neighborhood. Another researcher writes in her journal: "It's like unknown people crossing over your territory and taking it for all its worth. They (who remain faceless) come in and destroy what many have tried to build up." Gentrification is here articulated as an invasion or "civilian occupation" where real estate is deployed as a tactic in the contestation for space (Segal & Weizman, 2003). The faceless gentrifiers are described as those who claim space "for all its worth." While gentrification is represented as an urban improvement and is even used as model for reinvigorating the inner city (Smith, 2002), from the perspective of a young woman who has grown up in this neighborhood it is destructive of the community her neighbors have tried to create and improve (this quote repeats the introduction epigraph):

I was standing behind, I was walking down Columbia or something, and there were these three white frat boys in front of me and they were like (she imitates their voices) "Look at these people they totally don't understand like the value of

the space around them. Like they got a lot of real estate value here. They don't know what they got." And I'm like yeah we do. We just value it differently--it's a different kind of value. You see dollar bills when you see that building. I see that that's my grandmother's house, you know. That like this is my history! This is my place! You know, and you just want to step in because you think I'm stupid because I'm living in the projects -- Riverfront property! You know, "prime real estate." You know, just because some idiot like 80 years ago decided to build projects there because he didn't realize like 80 years later it would be prime real estate, that's not my fault, you know. That's lame.

Here gentrification is identified in imperialist terms. The speculative interests in real estate are interpreted as a threat to *her* neighborhood. Why, she asks, are property values privileged over her rights to stay in her neighborhood? In the same breath, she expresses her awareness of how the stereotypes associated with the housing projects devalue her, and justify the entitlement of outsiders who "want to step in because you think I'm stupid" and threaten to push her out of her home which is now 'riverfront property.' Her sense of belonging to her neighborhood is jeopardized by the comments of young white men who survey her neighborhood and see property values not homes. Another researcher commented on "outsiders' " financial concerns:

Ruby: They're buying out Harlem. White people are buying out Harlem! I don't want to say it --H & fucking M in Harlem by the 2 train.

Jasmine: You should have realized that when they came out with the Disney and the Old Navy. Come on now.

Janderie: Is H & M like really --

Ruby: Yes. It's a white fucking store!

As this exchange suggests, the researchers also drew connections to gentrification processes in other neighborhoods, most notably Harlem. Although identified with whiteness in the form of the Disney store, Old Navy and H & M, in fact the gentrifiers of Harlem are mainly middle class Black people. Although white people have moved into the neighborhood the numbers are negligible; here gentrification is obviously a class

driven process (whereas on the Lower East Side the process is racialized, masking the class-based nature of gentrification) (Hyra, under review; Smith, 1996). However, the visible face of neighborhood change takes the shape of the corporate identities who are not only obvious outsiders to the community, but emblematic of a shift that portends the exclusion of the poor and working class residents. In their discussions of gentrification, constructions of whiteness reflect the concerns of the young women about the changes in their neighborhood (Omi & Winant, 2002). Their comments provide an opportunity to 'reverse the gaze' as opposed to the more familiar perspective of how whites identify others.

You would think that after 9/11 people would be getting the fuck out of the Lower East Side, and instead I see more and more people coming in. I mean the people--I live in the projects, at Baruch projects-- and I see white people going for a run down Baruch drive. Unheard of ten years ago. They go for walks in the projects. There is a certain, like complete oblivion that they have that's just like -- like that fucking movie 'Living in oblivion.' Its like, duh walking around, totally unaware, like doo de doo de. It's like they feel like they have a right. But they don't really have a right, you know. I guess they do. But so do we.

Just the presence of white people in her neighborhood is menacing. Here anxieties about neighborhood change are projected on white bodies who represent not only the vanguard of gentrification, but their potential exclusion (this is similar to what Pamela Wridt identifies as "place panics," cf. Wridt, 2004). Whiteness is constructed as a conspicuous sign of not belonging coupled with the privilege to cross borders into unfamiliar territories, as suggested in previous comments, bringing to mind euphemistic representations of gentrifiers as "urban pioneers of the wild wild west" (Smith, 1996). Annissa describes another part of the dynamic of gentrification, where newcomers who are often completely oblivious of the changes to the neighborhood don't examine their own practices and are not conscious of the ways in which they use the neighborhood.

They take for granted the neighborhood as something for the taking. Long time residents on the other hand are not only aware of the changes, but also how the neighborhood is under surveillance in the form of an increased police presence and quality of life laws which target the men in their community. This is what really incenses Annissa, the total lack of consciousness of the white border-crossers, which is especially striking in contrast to the hyper-awareness expressed by young people of color in their own neighborhood, not to mention in unfamiliar neighborhoods. The lack of concern signals an entitlement which endangers her rights to her neighborhood.

Why are white people moving into our neighborhood? One perspective is articulated in Janderie's comments above, "culture seeking, white people .. want a taste of our culture rich environment." "The lack of culture" is deployed as an explanation for the imperialism associated with whiteness. From this perspective, white gentrifiers want to appropriate or participate in Latino or African American culture because they need to fill a "cultural void" or experience a sense of community (Ramos-Zayas, 2001, 79). The predominance of popular Black youth culture, in the forms of music, fashion, and language in American culture reaffirms this observation, coupled with the perception that "white people are taking everything but the burden" (Tate, 2003a). The researchers articulate the paradox Greg Tate identifies as being "seen as the most loathed and the most alluring of creatures.. the most co-optable and erasable of cultures" (Tate, 2003b, 14). On the one hand, gentrification signifies an appropriation of their culture and history and on the other hand, an erasure of it.

While the progressive "whitening" of their community reflects changing demographics in "their neighborhood," in fact, there have always been white people living on the Lower East Side. What's different is that now white people are establishing their presence in

areas of the neighborhood that have been identified with communities of color. While the border lines between the neighborhoods of the Lower East Side were never so clear, older white working class Jewish and Eastern European residents and their younger Puerto Rican, African-American, and Dominican neighbors carved out distinct and exclusive urban enclaves, generally not associating with each other. In addition, the constructions of whiteness associated with the gentrifiers are not applied to the older white working class residents who are identified not as white but by their ethnicity. This illustrates what Ramos –Zayas identifies as “shades of whiteness,” which, even if not explicit, reveals an implicit understanding of class-based differences (Ramos-Zayas, 2001).

Gentrification symbolizes not only the dichotomy of privilege versus disadvantage, but also the disconnect between scales (in both a figurative and geographical sense). In this sense, the structural and social inequities experienced by communities of color at the local scale, keep them “stuck in place” (Katz, 1998a). Whereas in contrast, white privilege is articulated as power which is mobile and “jumps scales,” the neighborhood, the city, and the nation. One researcher illustrates this discrepancy in scale in a story she tells about a black man who gets into a corporate party masquerading as a waiter in order that he can swipe wallets. The party is attended by heads of major companies like Coca Cola and Pepsi, the mayor, and other powerful people in government, who discuss plans to capture the black urban market. In exchange, the mayor makes promises to give tax breaks and property. As part of this marketing strategy, the corporations want to move into the poor neighborhood where coincidentally the black waiter lives, and inflating the local real estate economy. The young black waiter overhears this conversation, leaves, and on his way out gets arrested for hustling. Meanwhile at the same time the:

..Mayor hustles, corporations hustle. Don't get arrested. Martha Stewart, Inclone, all that shit! What the fuck is that? Money laundering. They don't get to jail. They get a slap on the wrists. They get a million dollar fine. What! A CEO makes a million dollars a year—uh –100 million, 200 million that's a slap on the wrist. You still go home with your mansion and your house. All your shit. All your stuff --you still got it. You and me. Fucked. Jail. How come? You going to tell me ¾ of the men are black? That is not a fucking coincidence.

Damn

That's Jim Crow laws. That is enslavement. Damn brothers going in there. They don't have no education they don't know how to read. How you going to get a tenth grader a job when in tenth grade they don't how to read. You should know about to read by the 3rd or 4th grade.

Here gentrification is narrated as a story of white corporate elites and the state converging (Sanjek, 1998). At the same time disinvestment is equated with the informal economy, embodied by the young black man with few options stealing wallets and landing in jail (Lipman, 2003, Parenti, 1999). The moral of the story identifies different scales (figurative and geographical) of injustice and control played out in terms of race, class and gender. The intersection of black, poor, male is symbolically equated with the informal economy, the lack of education, and jail (Duncan, 2000). Whiteness on the other hand, is represented as a party, a mansion, the license to avoid punishment, and the control over the city. As Ruby explains "It's like a secret society and I want to get invited to the party." To this end whiteness embodies the privilege the young women desire.

In grappling with the complex linkages between neighborhood restructuring, racial hierarchies, and representation, the young women articulated contradictory taxonomies of whiteness which both challenge and reproduce stereotypical constructions.

Sometimes guilty of stereotyping "the other" in reductive characterizations of "cultural void," unchecked ambition, and greed, they risk reaffirming the very binaries that affix young working class women to the 'ghetto.' Most problematically, the researchers

reductively conflate class and race in their correlation of whiteness with privilege. This in turn reifies the false dichotomy that all white people are wealthy and people of color poor or working class. Without an analysis or language for articulating class differences or the racialization of class, the researchers often fail to differentiate or complicate 'shades of whiteness' (Ramos-Zayas, 2001). While the researchers engage a structural racism framework in their interpretations, they often do so in a reductive fashion that fails to account for the interactions of cultural representations, public policies, and institutional practices (Aspen, 2004b). Instead the young women filter complex intersections of race and class through a lens that only sees black and white. But if the researchers essentialize whiteness they do so strategically. If the researchers' representations of whiteness as power and privilege sometimes reproduce stereotypes, they also challenge and interrogate this relationship. Rather than pretending to represent an accurate portrayal of white culture, their representation of gentrification as whiteness is an interpretation politically situated within the visible geographies of inequality evident in their neighborhood. Drawing connections between gentrification and white privilege makes sense based not only on the researchers observations of the shifting demographics of their neighborhood, but also within the broader context of their experiences of structural disparities in other parts of their lives, such as school or work. Flipping the script, the researchers re-define "the problem" as white privilege, rejecting stereotypes which blame young working class women of color for social inequities.

Displacements

"Displacement has been acknowledged but seen as an unfortunate corollary of processes that are revitalizing city centres, attracting private investment and securing the physical fabric of architecturally valuable neighbourhoods. This leads us to the question of whether these benefits are justified given the social costs involved." (Atkinson, 2003, 2345)

The pressure of displacement is not an abstract threat for young women but experienced in material ways: slips under the door offering a sell out in public housing, friends and family members relocated temporarily never to return home, personal experiences of being harassed by landlords, steadily increasing rents, and seeing friends displaced. Narratives of deceit, betrayal and loss characterize the “war stories” of displacement, offering an inside perspective on what Atkinson identifies as “the social costs involved” with processes of gentrification which is missing from the literature (but see Alicea, 2001; Muñiz, 1998).

One familiar story of landlords’ ‘broken promises’ was particularly common during the earlier stages of the neighborhood’s gentrification. It describes how residents are moved out during “renovations,” sometimes to find that they never return home again. Here is one researcher’s experience:

Carmen: They raise it up and then they go oh we’ll move you here and then you’ll pay way cheaper rent than what you pay now. And then you can just move back when we’re done and it’s bull crap.. Three years we had to live in this filthy building. ..those are the most ugliest piece of shit buildings. They have showers in the kitchen. They have tubs in the kitchen. The floor is slanted like this. When you go up the stairs you have to hold onto the rail cause else you fall out. I’m not joking. They offer you crap and then they go oh we’ll help you do that and we’ll help you do this. But it’s a load of crap.

A similar story as told by another researcher:

Janderie: My friend’s grandmother used to live in a beautiful beautiful apartment. On Houston. 6 years ago they said we’re going to put you in this apartment for a little while until we renovate and then you can move back in. This was 6 years ago! They put her--the bathroom doesn’t have a sink. It only fits a toilet and a shower. Not a tub. A toilet and a shower. And it’s like this big. The kitchen has a sink and a stove, no cabinets. No nothing. It has a refrigerator like in a hallway. Like back in a space by the hallway next to the bathroom. It’s a railroad. The living room is exactly the width of two twin beds. As long as it is, its like one twin bed and if you have it sideways, so tiny. Her bedroom is the only room with the window.

Ruby: Damn that sounds like a log cabin

Janderie: There's no windows in the salon. And then no windows in the kitchen and then that one window in the bathroom. Its like the worst thing in the world. Its so hot. There's no window. There's a window here and a window at the other end of the house. If you're in the middle you going to die. I feel so horrible for her.

Poor and working class residents who don't know how to speak English, who don't their rights, or who know how to negotiate the legal system may find themselves shifted around the neighborhood. The lives of 'temporarily relocated' residents are disrupted by an economic process which has little regard for their everyday lives.

Another common tale accounts how some residents 'voluntarily' move out due to unprecedented rent increases or landlord harassment. Less than six months after Erica learned the word gentrification her family left the neighborhood 'voluntarily' because the rent had increased again, doubling in three months time to \$2,500 for a tiny two bedroom apartment. They moved to a neighborhood in Queens where they knew no one, now "a bus, a train ..from everything and everyone we have ever known. Had we been able to find a decent affordable apartment in the Lower East Side we could have stayed "home." Though not technically evicted or displaced, this is not a pattern of "normal housing succession" as Freeman & Braconi recently suggested (2004, 51) euphemistically referring to this shift as "replacement."¹ In this case, poor and working class folks move out into other disinvested neighborhoods where they don't know anyone, where they may even experience the same cycle all over demonstrating Frederick Engels' insight from over 150 years ago that the bourgeoisie doesn't have any real solution to the so called housing problem, their only remedy is to shift poor people elsewhere (Engels, 1975, 71 cited in Smith, 1992). To this end, in addition to displacement and relocation within the city, a new trend reverses the Great Migration north of African American communities in the 1950s (Stack, 1996). Instead now

“everybody moves down south.. it’s like a little train” Ruby explained, who moved to Georgia two years after the project started, to take advantage of more affordable schooling and housing options. Others may move back to Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic in a reverse migration or shift between two places trying to find work and a place to settle following in the footsteps of previous generations (Aponte-Parés, 1995).

One familiar tactic to avoid displacement is for families to double or even triple up in small apartments in order to stay in their home neighborhoods. Overcrowding is correlated with mental and physical health risks, a decreased locus of control, and heightened stress. As opposed to the unconvincing interpretation that long time residents stay in their gentrifying neighborhoods to benefit from the “improvements” affluent residents bring to the neighborhood (Freeman & Braconi, 2004), my research and others suggest that poor and working class communities stay put for a variety of reasons (Fullilove, 2004). One very important factor is that there is an overall lack of affordable apartments on the whole in NYC. As mentioned in Chapter 3, poor residents pay an average rent burden of 61% (Freeman & Braconi, 2004) to stay in the neighborhood where they have developed connections with people and place over time. Again, this suggests that gentrification and related displacements need to be understood as a complex comprehensive process of neighborhood change which cannot only be understood in terms of real estate property values. The place attachment to the community, for example, may offer another frame for understanding the process from a resident’s perspective (as discussed further below). The threat of displacement (or replacement) associated with gentrification is expressed as a personal and collective loss of control.

Ruby: And you know what I walk in my house--my apartment building--my grandmother's building and you see Chinese people right in front of the elevator and like what the hell is this? what's going on? Like who moved out? Like who moved out? And you really don't know.

laughter

Ruby: And I'm not --but it's sad -- it's like we can never have our own place without someone else coming in and taking over. Now they want to take over and before they were kicking us out of the houses. So we moved into public buildings--

Carmen: She doesn't want to call them projects, she's like 'public buildings'.

Ruby: Public buildings. But now they trying to kick us out of the public or private or whatever building it is. To where though?

Annisia: We never had a place of our own. To begin with it wasn't our own. We don't own it, we never own anything.

Ruby: That's what I'm saying. We could never have a place of our own because of something that will always happen.

Always being pushed around and having to relocate is destabilizing and articulated as a lack of agency. "They" have the power to kick us out and "we can never have our own place" (Woolf, 1991). Having a place of one's own is equated with security, stability, and the ability to resist the whims of the market place. In short, symbolic ownership is identified with property ownership. In contrast to the historically accumulated white privilege in the form of home ownership, a primary means for wealth accrual in the US (Aspen, 2004b), people of color have historically accumulated disadvantage. This is evidenced in the durable racial disparities in home ownership rates: 78% Whites compares to 48% of Blacks and 46% of Hispanics (Aspen, 2004a). In short, this translates into the lack of capital needed to get ahead, to succeed.

Annisia: Like this is the way to success. It's like a ten point plan. Except one major point you miss in this is that you're not white. you know. And that you didn't have the money to begin with. Its like playing a relay race where everyone has a different starting point. Its just so frustrating.

Ruby: We just way behind.

Here the strategy of economic success is identified with whiteness. Privilege is “a different starting point” so that not only do people of color always have to work harder, but they can never quite catch up. They are always behind. For example, another researcher discussed how there is a plan to sell off the housing project she lives in,¹ she found out about this plan from a woman she worked with who is an upwardly mobile Latina: “And she was like ‘yeah I was thinking of buying one’...telling me how Latinos have to realize they have to do certain things. They have to play the ‘white way’ in order to get what they need.” Her comments express both a critique and desire. Home ownership was identified by all of the researchers as a future goal and symbolic of success, knowing that if their families owned property they wouldn’t be threatened with being ‘kicked out’ of their neighborhood and that they could even choose to make a profit off the market.

Control is identified as property ownership. This perspective coincides with President Bush’s rhetoric of the “ownership society” introduced in his 2004 campaign “I believe our country can and must become an ownership society. When you own something, you care about it. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country” (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/economy/july-dec04/ownership_12-15.html retrieved January 12, 2005). The question that begs to be answered is what about those who don’t own property? Do they not care about their communities? Do they not have a stake or a right to their community? The concept of “ownership society” suggests that those who don’t own are marginalized from society and threatened with spatial and social exclusion as witnessed in the experiences of gentrification and disinvestment. The ownership society is a slogan of neoliberalism and the privatization of the public sphere.

It is a new buzzword that dresses privilege up in new clothes. Within the framework of structural racism Bush's "ownership society" is an implicit raced and classed demarcation between the "haves" and the "have nots." For longtime residents of the LES, particularly those who live in the areas identified with communities of color, the possibility of acquiring property was constrained not only by their own poverty, but also by the financial redlining of their community when real estate values were low and undervalued. Now as their gentrifying neighborhood is greenlined, ownership is constrained by an inflated market which has outpriced everyone except the already wealthy.

Cultural displacement

Focusing solely upon those who have to leave their neighborhood, loses sight of another significant and insidious dimension of gentrification, cultural displacement. This perspective is missing from the gentrification literature that focuses upon issues of physical displacement (but see Alicea, 2001; Muñiz, 1998). A study of cultural displacement involves a consideration of what it means to witness the transformation of one's neighborhood beneath one's feet. This was the primary experience of gentrification articulated by the researchers who over the course of their lifetimes watched their neighborhood change.

Oh! My! God! That's what was happening to me! The trendy bars, the raised rent... the white people! There weren't this many white people in the ghetto before, then again it's starting to look less like a ghetto and more like confusion. Cute Italian and Japanese restaurants in one corner and a broke-down project building on the next. Everyday I walked down the same three blocks and I found something else that hadn't been there before, like the annoying little boutique that sold hand-crafted figurines. And even more annoying was the tea shop that seemed to never have a customer inside. All I could think to myself as "can't wait to see how my neighborhood looks in 10 years."

It's confusing, as Janderie suggests, and "annoying," hinting at the irritation she feels with regards to the signs of gentrification. If theories of place attachment and place identity (Altman & Low; 1992; Proshansky et al., 1983) suggest that one's relationship to environmental surroundings contribute to the "formation, maintenance, and preservation of the identity of a person, group or culture" (Low & Altman, 1992, 10), what then does the cultural transformation of one's community mean for self and group identifications? Place attachment describes a sense of ongoing security and the significance of place for social connections. This is especially true for those places where one is immersed for a long time and where one might learn new social roles, such as the contexts of one's childhood, which the Lower East Side was for most of the researchers (Proshansky et al., 1983; Chawla, 1992).

Mindy Thompson Fullilove's definition of "root shock," which draws an analogy to the stress a tree goes through when it is transplanted, is illuminating in this regard. She defines root shock (2004, 14) at the individual scale as "a profound emotional upheaval that destroys the working model of the world that ... undermines trust, increases anxiety about letting loved ones out of one's sight, destabilizes relationships, destroys social, emotional and financial resources" and increases health risks. Although Fullilove's conceptualization of root shock refers to the emotional stress reaction of being physically dislocated from one's neighborhood, this definition captures the researchers' psychological experiences of being culturally dislocated from their community while still living there. Perhaps 'root shocks' would more accurately describe the researchers' ongoing iterative experience of displacement. Unlike urban renewal, which virtually overnight displaced of whole communities, gentrification is a piecemeal progressive process taking place over many years. If at first the process is almost imperceptible,

'below the radar,' slowly person by person the neighborhood changes witnessed in new storefronts catering to a new audience, replacing familiar bodegas, mom & pop shops, the old timers' "social clubs," and one's neighborhood landmarks.

Displacement is experienced in this regard as a process of effacement at the neighborhood scale, where the signs of one's personal and cultural heritage are erased. What does it mean when the salon where your mother got her hair done every two weeks closes down? Or for the Charas Community Center that your family belonged to (along with countless other Loisaída residents), to be sold at city auction for private development without the community's permission? You miss the annual block parties which have ceased as many old time residents have left. Now as you walk through the neighborhood you only see a few flags of Puerto Rican heritage which used to be a dominant symbol of the Loisaída Puerto Rican community. What happened to the abundance of murals and graffiti walls depicting the community's concerns? From the R.I.P memorial walls in honor of community members that passed to the murals commemorating Puerto Rican and African American history that beautified the neighborhood. For example, the mural depicting Bimbo Rivas on Avenue B, once hailed as the poet of the Loisaída, is gone now as the building has been destroyed and replaced with a new condo.

Whose neighborhood is this anyway? The neighborhood landscape is a site of contestation. As Janderie stated earlier the Lower East Side is "looking less like the ghetto and more like confusion." In terms of cultural transformation, the semantic differences between displacement and replacement (Freeman & Braconi, 2004) are moot. The effect is the same. While "an action at the household level appears unsuited to an analysis of strategic neighborhood dominance," as Atkinson's asserts (2003,

2346), this loses sight not only of the empirical evidence of the wholesale transformation of the neighborhood, but the experience of it as expressed by long-time residents like the young women (Alicea, 2001). The neighborhood context is being “taken over” and changed beyond recognition. While all places arguably undergo change, the dramatic shifts of the Lower East Side are reflective of the “invasion” of the middle and upper class (as Ruth Glass originally defined gentrification), of outsiders “taking it for all its worth,” as Jasmine stated previously.

In short, gentrification is experienced as a loss of self, community and culture. The changing material conditions of one’s everyday life have profound psychological implications as suggested by theories and accounts of place attachment and identity. As suggested by Fullilove’s concept of root shock (2004), displacement is traumatic. The threat of erasing of “my grandmothers house,” my history,” and “my neighborhood” is accompanied by feelings of anxiety and anger. The anger expresses feelings of not belonging, not feeling welcome in the community where one grew up, the place though of as ‘home’. From this perspective, Jasmine’s exclamation “They are killing the neighborhood!”, referring to the new upscale restaurants that line Clinton Street, is understandable. In the place of their not so distant childhood memories, of the places that formed part of their everyday life, are new businesses symbolic of the processes of gentrification. Manifest in the changing neighborhood landscape is the threat of social and spatial exclusion.

Ambivalence

That’s why we have to teach people, like little kids, their history before the neighborhood screws them over because then their not going to want to know

about the neighborhood. Because then they're going to be like why the knife keeps stabbing me? --it's stabbing me-- you know. (Annissa)

Given their difficult experiences growing up in a gentrifying and disinvested community, it is understandable that the young women's relationship to their neighborhood is strained. It is not surprising that in the absence of a supportive context or an engaging positive environment for self-development, that the young women would express alienation from a neighborhood they experience as hostile. At the same time that they don't feel part of a community, the young women express a yearning, almost a desperate wish for spaces where they can find support, guidance, and connect with other young people (outside of the often negative contexts of educational institutions). They express a desire to be taken seriously and be involved in something bigger than themselves. Not only do the young women express their aspiration to transform their own personal situations, but a deep commitment towards their families, and a desire to give back to their communities. However the cumulative experience of disinvestment and associated negative outcomes, can transform civic engagement into alienation and pride into betrayal and self-loathing (Fine, 2003).

The ambivalence of the young women reflects their ongoing negotiations between these multiple contradictory situated positions. Moving between the entanglements of discourses and spatial practices embedded within the Lower East Side context is a project of shifting lens and scales, as young women construct their subjectivities. Subjectivity is constituted and reconstituted in the 'marking' and 'making sense' of oneself in the world (Willis, 1977, 173). How young women position themselves in relation to their neighborhood is intimately bound with their self-identification, and is a means for reflecting upon, reproducing, and transforming the self (Cahill, 2000). A consideration of the tensions between the multiple positions articulated by the young

women reveals their struggle in a space of 'betweenness,' "a position that is neither inside nor outside" (Mascia-Lees et al, 1989, 33 cited in Katz, 1994, 72). Lise Nelson identifies betweenness as "a space that captures the instability, partiality and situatedness of intersubjective relationships, self-reflexivity, and knowledge production" (1999, 349). Both address the difficulties of young women who are, as one researcher identifies: "thinking in the system at the same time thinking outside of it. Like I keep thinking about Foucault. Like that whole idea of like how can you think outside of the box if the box created you? And I think that they (the young women) are living examples that you can think outside and still be in it. Like to be split." The ongoing discussions among the young women about their relationship to their neighborhood provides an opening on how they navigate the divide, how they manage to find a space to articulate their self-understanding on the shifting grounds of gentrification and disinvestment. The tensions between two radically different positions staked out the contours of their positions. On the one hand, is the escape narrative which identifies leaving the neighborhood with success. The other is defined by a commitment to 'stick it out' and an ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982). Somewhere in the middle the young women configure and reconfigure their subjectivities in personal narratives that reveal pain, critical insight, and their concerns for their community.

The first story is well known. It is the classic success story where one leaves the old neighborhood "for the good life." For example, at the turn of the last century the Lower East Side was considered a first stop, a stepping-stone for immigrants on the way to bigger and better things. Success was identified in leaving the neighborhood for uptown or even Brooklyn (Mele, 2000). For young women growing up in the poor and working class neighborhoods of the Lower East Side, dreams of becoming "rich and famous" also involve leaving the neighborhood. From this perspective, leaving = success and

staying = failure, and thus the neighborhood symbolizes failure. One researcher writes in her journal:

I really don't like my neighborhood very much. I never really hang out in the Lower East Side. I just feel like I'm too good for the people in the Lowa. And I feel like I have too much to offer myself and the world to just waste my days and nights on the corner fighting off horny teenage guys who just coming off their highs and are on the way to the bodega for munchies!!

Here Janderie conveys the shame she attaches to her community. Differentiating herself as “too good” for the neighborhood she sets herself apart: “this neighborhood has nothing that I want. Nothing at all;” her comments betray her frustration at the material conditions of her community that keep her from becoming who she wants to be. The neighborhood is identified as a barrier to her positive self-development and her desired self-identity. In this regard, she expresses her wish to leave the neighborhood to escape the site-specific stereotypes of the ‘inner city’ and an ability to re-create oneself anew and achieve her goals.

Janderie was not alone. At one time or another, all of the researchers talked about “moving on up and out” as means of escaping the trappings of poverty and the frustrations involved with negotiating disinvestment on a daily basis. Janderie’s desire to leave is expressed in individualized terms. To this end she does not transcend the racially-coded binaries of the stereotypes, but reaffirms the differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Her aspiration for upward mobility is expressed as leaving ‘them’ behind who embody the material conditions that she wants escape.

Paradoxically, this definition of success is defined in similar terms to “selling out.”

Selling out, however, is described as the “worst thing you can do.” It is, in effect, moving

out of the 'hood, leaving your "people" (your community) behind. Like the term "acting white," which equates blackness with failure and whiteness with success, selling out is a rhetorical move that reinforces the binaries of black/white, lazy/ambitious etc. This practice recalls the strategy Stuart Hall identifies as 'splitting' (discussed in chapter 3), which through marking difference symbolically delineates between insiders and outsiders or between who is included and who is excluded (Hall, 1997b, 258). For example, one researcher who by her description didn't act "ghetto pride black" was called Oreo by family members because of the way she pronounced her words. Exposed by a new vocabulary word or an inflection of the voice or as one young woman explained, "when there's a tiny bit of luxuries in their language." Selling out is taken as a sign of betraying the community or of being excluded from one's community as "not black enough." 'Selling out' and 'acting white' function to maintain the social order by threatening exile and the potential of not belonging anywhere. It can become difficult to figure a way out of the binary oppositions that structure social identifications :

Annissa: I think even worse and more upsetting, is that when we reinforce the stereotypes for ourselves. Because that's what we see and that's what we think only exists. The few people that break out of the stereotypes start to think that they're better than everyone else and it's mainly because they think they achieved some great feat by getting outside of that stereotype because they've been shat on by their own community by breaking out of it, you know. It's like this terrible little window that goes on and on and round and round--

Jasmine: And then people in the community think they've sold out and then they start to sell out.

Annissa: Out of rebellion. And so everybody thinks they're rebelling against each other but really they're just like playing the same game.

Navigating the contradictory subject positions involved selling out, being excluded for having 'sold out', and trying to challenge stereotypes can feel like a 'catch 22'. It can feel almost impossible to see a way out. All of the researchers have at one time or another

been identified as a sell out. Even though “the worst thing you can do” is leave the community behind, in fact “success” is represented and understood as just that, leaving the ghetto. For example, one researcher describes success in the prototypical terms of the American Dream as the house with the white picket fence. In fact, many of the most successful icons of Black and Latino popular culture, including well known gangsta rappers, have done just that, moved into large suburban houses in predominantly white communities. As Janderie explains: “I want the best of the best. If I have all this money and it so happens that all these white people live here but this is the best of the best, then I’m going to move there.”

In the gentrifying LES leaving the ‘ghetto’ for the good life may be as simple as moving to the condo next door. This is captured in an inflected version of selling out -- “brand new.” “Brand new” essentially refers to someone who acts “like they don’t know where they’re from or who they are,” in effect, someone who might act like they are new to the neighborhood. One researcher was identified as ‘brand new’ by a man on the bus, who accused her of pretending not to know him. The term “brand new” is linguistically more accurate metaphor in the gentrifying context of a poor working class neighborhood where long time residents don’t own property and technically can’t “sell out.” One researcher articulates the predicament of this subject position:

I complain so much about how the white people are coming and making everything “trendy” but on the other hand, I like being trendy and I want to be able to one day mingle with that crowd but I hate the fact that they are forcing us out. Why can’t it be that we all come together to form a culture rich yet trendy neighborhood? Why does it have to be one or other?

Identifying both desire and displacement with the white trendy body, this researcher struggles between her differently situated subject positions. The contradictions of

'leaving the neighborhood behind' are at once obvious and confusing when imagined in own her gentrifying neighborhood. Where does she fit in? Will she be displaced too? Within this context, she reveals her personal struggles negotiating on the one hand the material conditions of disinvestment and related stereotypes of young women of color and her desires for upward mobility. While this young woman's position appears contradictory from the outside this belies an analysis bridging critique and desire.

The most blatant expression of the tensions between the diametrically opposed subject positions young women struggle to bridge is Ruby's dream to live in a white gated community.

Ruby: A community that only allows white people. But if you have enough money you can move in.

Annissa: Sister they will sling your ass up on a cross!

Ruby: Because this is the way I feel, right. If I cannot create my own community what the hell am I zillionaire? Listen this is the way I see it. All those communities are white gated communities anyway. Tribeca is a white gated community and everybody –I want to move in there. So what's wrong with that?

Annissa: Why what makes you want to move in there? What's so special about Tribeca?

Ruby: Because it's all these fucking white rich pissy--

Laughter

Annissa: And you want to go there?

Ruby: I want to move in there so I can disturb the peace. That's what I want to do.

Laughter

Ruby: I want the Daily News to deliver my newspaper, deliver to my doorman and I'm coming down there with two fucking robes and a bath towel on my head with the African flag and I just want to disturb some fucking people. That's what I want to do. I want to play Black music.

Annisia: She's like me except she seems so fixed on disturbing white people

Ruby: Right. Disturb the motherfuckers. They can't kick me out because I'm going to have permits to everything. I'm going to have permits and I'm going to have notices around what time I'm going to blast my music. So don't you dare take a nap! I'm going to be blasting some hard core BMX from the projects of yonder. That's what I'm going to do damn. I'm going to blast it.

As part of her plan to get into the white gated community Ruby plans to change her name so they don't know her ethnicity and have someone else buy it for her. Once she's in, 'past the gates,' she strikes back. Interestingly Tribeca is not a white gated community, but rather an upscale gentrified neighborhood in downtown Manhattan which is notable for its fancy restaurants, converted loft buildings, and its proximity to Wall Street. For her it is symbolic of social and spatial exclusion and white privilege. An example of the future of the Lower East Side.

The plan to live in the white gated community is a fantasy of material wealth, self-expression, and revenge. In her narrative whiteness is identified with both privilege and her anger at the disadvantages she has had to endure due to structural racism. Just as white people have moved into her neighborhood, disturbing her peace, she wants to do the same. Expressing her desire to be heard in a white world, she asserts her presence, her entitlement, her anger, in effect –her identity—in a space that erases all her traces, that denies her self-expression. She emphasizes her black identity through the conspicuous display of the African flag and playing Black music. Here she demands that her blackness be taken into account.

Obvious is the danger of the plan, as one of her colleagues voiced at the outset "sister they will sling your ass up on a cross!" In the same breath that she talks boldly about disturbing the peace, she knows she will be under surveillance, already making plans to

back herself up with the necessary permits. The paradox of her fantasized success is that even if she makes a bold entrance into the white world and demands that her black identity be taken into account, she still sees herself under surveillance and on guard. Despite her portrayal of material wealth and visibility, she cannot imagine the security and entitlement that accompany white privilege. In the end, her plan ends up reproducing the mutually defining stereotypes of whiteness and blackness, it doesn't effect change. As one of her colleagues pointed out: "How about we change the law so that shit can't happen?" To which Ruby responded: "We're not going to be able to change the law" revealing her cynicism towards the potential of democracy. As she suggests another time:

"Money is power. I hate to say it but it's the truth. If you have money ..eventually you can accumulate and can you just do what you want to do and do what you see fit. So until you guys have money --its nice to have conversations like this (about social change) but until you have money there's nothing you can really do about it."

Here upward mobility is identified as the escape narrative. Money is the power to escape the neighborhood, the stereotypes, and equated with freedom. Money is equated with transformation. This perspective makes sense given her experience of community disinvestment on the one hand, and her own personal experience of the lack of money as an obstacle to fulfilling personal goals. In fact, she expresses a rhetoric of personal choice and individual concern that is in keeping with the values of neoliberalism, and of capitalism more generally.

The other end of the spectrum is a little more optimistic about the possibilities of social change, involving a commitment to stay in the neighborhood in order to transform it. This perspective is associated with the discourse of responsibility that is prevalent within

communities of color to “uplift” the community and give back to it once one attains success. Here’s how one researcher describes this position:

Once your settled and grounded go back to either your community ..and educate the people who are there on what’s going on and what they need to know. Or just educate them on reading up on and just learning how to read. .. Cause that’s like making a move and making sure that they understand and want to do something about it. You know it’s one thing to just go in, and you know, “let me tell you this and this is going on. Okay bye.” That’s one thing. Another thing is to stay there and help them, you know learn, and understand and make a movement about it, you know. So I think that’s what could be done to change the whole system.

From this perspective, staying in the neighborhood is associated with social change. She articulates it as a movement that is integral to the community, developed from the inside with the community as a long-term process. Working from within the community, at the local level is understood as a way “to change the whole system” (Gibson-Graham, 2002; Marston et al., forthcoming). Building community could also be associated with an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Day, 2000), in which primacy is placed upon attachment and sustaining relationships in context within a feminist framework of identity development. On the one hand, framing one’s relationship to the neighborhood within the context of caring for others resonated for most of the young women who had been socialized to take care of others and who had many care-giving responsibilities in their everyday lives. On the other hand, the discourse of caring for one’s community was a red flag that concerned some who were not interested in playing that role when as it is they never have time to care for themselves or “do me” (see chapter 6). It was clear to all that this is not easy work. If the escape narratives involved leaving the stereotypes behind, staying within the community involved challenging them head-on and ultimately continuing to deal with the same pressures and frustrations of disinvestment and gentrification articulated earlier. This also means dealing with the sadness, the anger, and the frustration at witnessing their neighborhood change and having to fight their

exclusion from their home community. Of course, it is not all negative, there are some victories, for example when Bette Midler and the Trust for Public Land financed the land trust that saved many community gardens in their neighborhood in 1999 from development. For some, to get involved in community change was asking too much, to in effect 'give back' to a context which had negative associations. Their hesitation to get involved in community change reflected their difficult experiences of disinvestment and disenfranchisement, that, of course makes it all the more important, as one researcher argues:

That's why we have to teach people, like little kids, their history before the neighborhood screws them over because then their not going to want to know about the neighborhood. Because then they're going to be like 'why the knife keeps stabbing me? It's stabbing me!' you know ?.. People most importantly young women do not feel invested in their community or connected to it if they don't have the positive aspects of their community, their lives and their personal strengths reinforced to them. If you focus on the positives then you are less likely to consume whatever is fed to you. Such as stereotypes.

From this perspective, re-defining oneself in alignment with the community involves a broader understanding of history and community change. Challenging stereotypes and learning about the community goes hand in hand. The well-being of young women is inextricably connected to the health of their community. While all of the researchers eventually expressed an interest in "change," as evidenced by the Makes Me Mad: project, for some the interest to get involved in neighborhood change and activism was developed through ongoing conversations with the other researchers about their frustrations about the neighborhood reflecting the power of collective engagement and consciousness raising (see chapter 6 for more discussion). In the conclusion to the Makes Me Mad the researchers collectively propose a holistic vision of self-directed community change and self-representation. This is in stark contrast to their current

experiences of the disinvestment and gentrification of their neighborhood, processes which feel very much out of their control (boldface in original):

The ultimate and most beneficial means to an end of the negative effects of such a stark lack of resources is a **community that is self-sufficient and self-concerned**. It is a priority to have young womyn who can feel connected and have a desire to contribute and be involved in their community... (our) research has identified several important ways to build a stronger and more positive community, one that is able to stand in the face of the stereotypes that its children have been pegged with.

The young women advocated for community participation in community development, and specifically their own involvement. To this end the young women also included their "community building needs" in the conclusion of the Makes Me Mad report, arguing for their concerns to be taken into account. Building a strong community is understood to be critical to the project of challenging negative public representations. The language that the young women chose echoes the discourses of political autonomy and self-determination associated with the Black Power and radical Puerto Rican nationalist movements, and other revolutionary movements of the 1960s, who not only asserted a positive affirmation of racial and ethnic identities but an end to economic dependence (Aponte-Parés, 1998).

The above statement could be interpreted as an implication that the community is currently not concerned, is disconnected, and is also dependent, and that what needs to change is the community's behavior. Do the young women then reproduce the very stereotypes they are trying to challenge? Because this statement concludes the researcher's discussion of the lack of resources in their community and a largely structural analysis of the Makes Me Mad report, it is perhaps better understood as a

subject position forged in opposition to the lack of control experienced by the young women and their families in their disinvested, now gentrifying, community. In this regard, an emphasis upon the community's agency should be understood as a claim of "taking back" their neighborhood and staking a position in the future of the neighborhood. This position reiterates Annissa's earlier comment that because young women are not invested or connected to the neighborhood they lose sight of not only the positive aspects of their community, but also of themselves. This in turn, she suggests, leads young women to buy into the stereotypes. To this end, the appeal for self-concern, self-sufficiency, and connection to the community could be understood as a re-valuation of the community's strengths. It involves foregrounding the positive aspects of the community in contrast to the negative imagery which dominates representations of communities of color or the 'ghetto' and the people who live there. It is also a call for the community to participate and take control of their neighborhood and the way they are represented. Here is how the report ends (Rios-Moore et al., 2004, bold face in original):

We believe that by simply living your truth and encouraging others to do the same, you can participate in your community's growth. In the process of being true to yourself and the network of people that make up your community **you can help to knock down the myths that hold our communities down.**

The researchers invite other young women to challenge stereotypes by "living your truth" in order to participate in community change. What is immediately striking is the emphasis upon agency, especially given that the Makes Me Mad project focuses upon the relationships between the structural disinvestment of their community, stereotyping, and young women's self-understanding. While the researchers don't actually think that young women can transform the community all by themselves, in fact they do think young women need to and can participate in community change. This does not obviate the fact that the problems are structural. If "living your truth" and "being true to yourself"

is vague and sounds somewhat essentialist --as if there is one true identity-- this follows the young womens' discussion of their struggle over self-image and the "challenge of being a contradiction.. of being many things at once" (ibid). Within this framework, being true to oneself involves embracing one's complexity and hybridity and refusing "the way stereotypes oversimplify, reduce and limit us." It is similar to how Robin D.G. Kelley explains a 'core black culture,' which on the surface sounds essentialist but which places emphasis upon diversity and "incorporates a diverse and contradictory range of practices, attitudes, and relationships that are dynamic, historically situated and ethnically hybrid" (Kelley, 1997, 22).

In calling for their participation, the researchers want to reaffirm for other young women of color and young people in general that they are transformative subjects and not passive victims or subjects following assigned scripts. That they too have agency even if they feel stuck and trapped by disinvestment and the stereotypes which try to fix them in a particular location. The young women researchers are inviting other young people to take part in their project of challenging the status quo.

While the two ends of the spectrum --the escape narrative and the commitment to stick it out--represent very different approaches to negotiating their complicated subject positions, the researchers nevertheless shift back and forth, most of the time identifying a position inbetween. For example, most researchers struggled with how to achieve one's goals, to "do me," achieve financial stability and still give back to the community. The Makes Me Mad project suggests that perhaps the distance between of the two positions is not so extreme, as they come from the same place.

This location is an emotional, cultural, psychological, political, social and geographical crossroads located in the gentrifying, disinvested Lower East Side. Is this what it's like to live on the border?

"Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants" (ibid).

Gloria Anzaldúa's (1999) conceptualization of the borderland captures the difficult positions of young women growing up in the gentrifying/disinvested Lower East Side neighborhood (see Alicia, 2001). The experience of gentrification is characterized by violence and pain, like the "the US-Mexican border, es una herida abierta where the third world grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture" (Anzaldúa, 1999, 25). It is from this location "created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" of disinvestment and gentrification, that the young women negotiate multiple contradictory situated positions. As Annissa suggests "It's that whole thinking outside the box while you're in it" identifying the bifurcated perspective of being the "other." What Dubois (1989) calls "double consciousness" and which Anzaldúa takes even further in her conceptualization of 'mestiza consciousness': "Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la mestiza undergoes a struggle of the flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war...the coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of references causes *un choque*, a cultural collision" (ibid, 100). As articulated by Annissa:

I have to preserve a certain amount of my dignity. I'm not going to sell out in a way that's not good for me. Like I think selling out, like when we talk about what

selling out means, it means something different for every person. Like for some people it's like moving out your hood, for some people its back stabbing. For me it's doing something that goes against my heart. And for my heart I can't live the way they do.... Fuck you over and then smile at you the next minute. I cannot live like that. I refuse to live like that. What-what am I gaining? What am I gaining? There has to be some other way that I can do me, and do other people, do my family, get my mom out of the projects. I don't want her to live there. her only option right now is to buy the apartment that we're living in. why the hell does se want to live there. She's lived there for 36 years. She's been surrounded by the same shit. Now what I'm calling shit is my people. Hello! That is deep. Who the fuck am I calling shit? Me! My cousins, my friends, my god sister. All these people who fuck up the projects and piss in the elevator. That's my family yo. And I'm busy dissing them. Why the fuck did they end up there. Who did them wrong?

Here in this space of 'betweenness' the young women articulate the push and pull of being inside and outside of the box at the same time. This inability to rest comfortably in a particular subject position or to change their position reflects their struggle to make sense of their experience within the discourses available. For young working class women of color growing up on the Lower East Side, the construction of subjectivity, "a way of understanding one's relation to the world," is fraught. Their discussions bear witness to the problems of trying to bridge structural and individual interpretations of their neighborhood experiences, of negotiating the entanglements of discourses constituted in a shifting terrain defined by disinvestment and gentrification.

This my home
this thin edge of
barbwire.
(Anzaldúa, 1999, 25)

It is painful. The Makes Me Mad project created an opening for working through the contradictions, to "float ambiguously in some unstable, dangerous, hybrid zone of indeterminacy in-between" and not "stay in their appointed place" (Hall, 1997b, 236). Herein is the possibility of disturbing the stability of the cultural order. It is as Stuart Hall argues, a contestation from within the representation which "accepts and works with the

shifting, unstable character of meaning , and enters, as it were into a struggle over representation, while acknowledging that, since meaning can never be finally fixed, there can never be any victories" (Hall, 1997b, 274). But if it is partial and temporary, as Hall suggests, it is a still an achievement to dislodge and subvert the power of "a racialized regime of representations" (Hall, 1997b). In Chapter 7 I discuss further the connections between young women's self-representation and their position in their neighborhood, and the role of representations in challenging global economic restructuring.

Chapter 5.

Learning on the Lower East Side

What are young women learning about themselves in school? In this chapter, my analysis traces the relationship between public representations of young working class women of color and the institutional context of schools, in order to provide a case study of how stereotypes are produced and negotiated in a specific environmental setting. I chose to focus upon schools for a few different reasons. Schools were a major subject of discussion throughout the research project, due in part to young women's problems negotiating this context and because schools are very important sites for young women between the ages of 16 and 22 who are making critical decisions about their future. In this regard, Anita Harris states (2004, 27): "For youth in general, but for young women in particular, academic success has become the key to safeguarding the future. It is not only considered essential to securing an appropriate adult professional and consumer lifestyle, but it is also touted as the most effective weapon against disaffection, criminality and disenfranchisement. Doing well at school is vital for good citizenship." Young women know that schools are a key site for social reproduction and transformation. If they drop out or fail out of school they severely curtail future opportunities. As Lipman argues (2002, 405): "In the information economy, education is a key determinant of whether one will be a high paid knowledge worker or part of the downgraded labor sector." Whereas previously a young person could get a good job with a high school diploma, now that is not even guaranteed with a college degree. Second, like their gentrifying neighborhood the public schools are also going through dramatic changes characterized by privatization and school reform programs which emphasize accountability and standards, paralleling the increased surveillance in the

neighborhood. Finally, I want to untangle the tangle of pathologies in order to show how one particular set of stereotypes: 'uneducated,' 'ambitionless,' and 'lacking in intelligence' is produced in a particular environmental setting, school.

My analysis attempts to bridge the material and the psychological, addressing the social, political and economic *conditions* of schooling and the connected contradictory subjectivities young working class female students of color develop in the productive settings of schools. At the same time I look at young women's interpretations of their school experiences, how they negotiate disinvested educational contexts and connected misrepresentations of deficit, while making sense of themselves. To this end, I connect theories of performativity within an analysis of structural inequities. Working with contemporary theories of identity (Butler, 1999; Nelson, 1999) and identifications (Hall, 1997a), my discussion of the multiple performances of young working class urban women of color going to school in the Lower East Side will take into account their shifting identifications, the ways in which young women emphasize or erase different aspects of their social identities. Connecting theories of performativity (Butler, 1999; Nelson, 1999) with intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1995; Anzaludua, 1990) I consider the ways in which young women construct their subjectivities as they accommodate, negotiate, and challenge deficit social constructions in school.

Criss-crossing the body: Fluid identifications

The scale of the body is especially significant in a neoliberal economic context that puts a premium on the individual, on personal responsibility, and independence. The body is central to my investigation of young women's negotiation of subjectivity not only because of the ways in which the body is figured in politics but also because of the embodied

ways in which young women learn who they are in specific geographical settings. My analysis traces the relationship between social constructions of young working class women of color, their everyday performances in school settings, and their identifications.

Judith Butler's embodied theories of gender identity and performativity are relevant to this analysis. Focusing upon practice and action, Butler recalls Vygotsky's social interactionist theories of identity (1978) in which development is conceived as an ongoing process in which interpersonal (social) processes are transformed into intrapersonal (internal) processes. Butler's theory is physical and practice-based; subjectivity is in and of the body. The body confirms and creates a fiction of coherence of gender through repetition of a series of gestures constituting an illusion of a gendered self. Like rote learning, through doing things over and over again we become who we are. In our engagement with the world, our identities are constructed in action and in relation with others. Because we inhabit and perform our social identities, they appear and feel "natural" (cf. Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, 1977). Extending this analysis, how is the illusion of young working class women of color as 'uneducated', as 'ambitionless' maintained? Why is it unsurprising, seemingly "natural" that so many young women of color, for example, drop out of school, become teenage mothers? Witness the production of an identity.

By focusing on the scale of the body, Butler adds a geographical and material dimension to theories of social construction (even if that's not her intention) reminding us that while identity is a abstract, fluid, shifting, it is at the same time grounded in a singular corporeal body in space. An emphasis upon place in the study of identity is theoretically significant in many ways (Proshansky et al, 1983), but here I will focus on two aspects particularly important to understanding the experiences of young women. First, a study

of place-identities assumes that places are reference points for particular constructions of self. Following this line of thinking, it is necessary to take into account the relations between the different places of our everyday lives. Throughout our day as we go from home to work, from school to the shopping mall, we access different expectations of who we are, and sometimes discrepant ways of making sense of who we are. As we move between different life spaces shifting selves may be transformative, disorienting or even painful. In this way the body is a theoretical and physical crossroads. The criss-crossing of the body opens up possibilities for different interpretations of experience, for multiple performances of self as student, sister, mother, worker, consumer, etc. Second, the analysis of place-identities needs to consider the different scales at which identity is constituted and the relations between scales; between say, the scale of the body, and the urban or global scales. Relevant questions following this argument include: what are the similarities between young working class women of color's experience of school on the Lower East Side? Or in New York City? A broader scope of analysis would 'jump scales' in order to understand: What is the relationship of young women's experiences of school to the neoliberal economic context?

Looking closely at the spectacle of school, I ask what are the repeat performances demanded of young working class women of color in the context of education? How are these performances embodied and improvised? My analysis begins by connecting performativity with theories of intersectionality, which offers a more nuanced and complex understanding of young women's performances beyond a singular focus on gender. Advanced by critical race and black feminist scholars (Crenshaw, 1995; Collins, 2000; Anzaldua, 1990), intersectionality theorizes the complex and fluid configurations of our identities accounting for the ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality criss-cross our bodies and subjectivities. Considering young women's performances from a

geographical perspective, I then consider how different aspects of our identities are emphasized or erased in various settings and at different scales. For example, How do young women construct their subjectivities in school? Or how are young women of color identified and constructed in disinvested schools located in gentrifying communities?

Following Stuart Hall (1997a), my analysis considers the shifting 'diasporic identifications' of young women, the ways in which at a given moment a young woman may occupy a particular position and align with a particular standpoint. It is the process "of feeling yourself through the contingent, antagonistic, and conflicting sentiments of which human beings are made up. Identification means you are called in a certain way..." (ibid, 292). As opposed to Butler's rejection of the thinking conscious subject, agency is implied in the concept of identification. Combining theories of diasporic identifications with performativity, I "smuggle agency in" in order to account for young women's self-reflexive negotiation of shifting situated positions (Nelson, 1999). To this end, I draw upon performativity selectively in order to 'flesh out' subjectivity as it is embodied and performed in concrete spaces. Without adopting Butler's assumptions of an 'abstract subject position' or falling prey to what Nelson identifies as "functionalistic notion of 'compelled repetition' of hegemonic discourse" (1999, 347), I use her theory instrumentally and in concert with other contemporary theories of identity.

Considering young women's identifications (both a noun and a verb) emphasizes the active, social, and temporal dimensions of performativity. Performances are interpretative, hybrid, multiple, complex, and subject to revision. A fictional snapshot of a student performance over the course of a school day illustrates the shifting nature of identifications:

1st period Science. Late. I'm tired. I didn't do the homework and I don't understand what's going on. .
 2nd period English. I love the book we're reading. I love my teacher. I want to be a writer!
 3rd period Gym. Cut class. What's the point?
 4th period. Lunch. Studying for 5th period Math exam. No time for eating, flirting, or hanging out with my best friend. Only one cigarette break.
 5th period Math test. I pass. What a relief.
 6th period. Global History. Memorize and regurgitate. The dates don't make sense to me.
 7th period. Art. I can express myself!
 8th period. Spanish. ½ hour to go. I'm bored, falling to sleep. Almost out of here.

My analysis is two fold. First I will look at the production of particular performances in school settings on the Lower East Side and then, I will address the range of possible performances of being a student, and specifically how young women negotiate deficit social representations of 'lazy,' 'uneducated,' and 'lacking in intelligence.' Analysis will consider the multiple ways young working class women of color use, challenge, and improvise upon these performances and in so doing construct their subjectivities.

Working working working

*A Job
 A Job to put my brain to work
 My brain that tells me I'm Ok
 My brain that can produce the necessary rhythm
 To set my idle body straight
 My brain that yearns for a sincere break
 I don't expect the world to stop for me
 To stop its mission for my sake
 I only ask for a clearer path
 To put my brains and hands to work
 To prove my worth
 A Job
 A Job My God*

-excerpt from "A Job" by Bimbo Rivas (1939-1992), (Algarin & Holman, 1994, 359).

To understand the performances of being a student, it is useful to consider related performances of working. Work is already a big part of most young working class peoples' everyday lives. All of the young women were involved in some type of work whether paid or unpaid, after school and on the weekends. Work involved low-paying service jobs for multi-national corporations like McDonalds and KFC, participating in paid youth 'reform' programs, work-study in college, baby sitting, or the unpaid work of childcare, housework, and making meals for the family that is expected particularly of young women. Some young women worked as many as 20 hours a week outside of school, and one in particular worked much more than that on a regular basis as her wages contributed significantly to the household expenses. Another researcher worked full time and went to college on and off, taking classes at night and on the weekends while working to save money for college tuition and to pay off loans. She was caught in a cycle where after three years she had only finished one semester's worth of college credits. These work experiences certainly influenced the high educational aspirations of the young women involved, they knew all too well what it was like to be involved in the service industry getting paid minimum wage for repetitive, tiring work that demands a lot of your time, your energy, and your body, and gives little in return (McDowell, 2004; Stack, 2001). School promises something better.

But if a high school diploma once guaranteed a job, now even a college degree does not secure a meaningful occupation. Anita Harris argues that although young women are perceived as the most likely to succeed in the new economy, in reality the labor force is highly stratified by race and class. Not only are young women to be found among the highest levels of the new professions of the service, communications, and technology industries, they are also "found on the fringes of the formal economy, in part-time, casual, insecure, and unprotected labor" (Harris, 2004, 40).

Pauline Lipman argues that schools sort young people for differentiated roles in the labor force: "Although the dominant narrative about the economy is that everyone will need significantly upgraded skills, the actual picture is quite different. ... While the new economy requires a workforce with diverse skills, a large corps of low-wage service workers need only basic literacies, the ability to follow directions, and accommodating dispositions toward work (Lipman, 2003, 340). To this end, my analysis will explore how schools on the Lower East Side are preparing young women to participate in the neoliberal economy.

The context: Disinvested public educational institutions

It's all about a cat eating its tail. They set it up so you get damn bored so you don't go to school. Then you wind up failing out, looking like an idiot. That's some deep shit. That they could set up a system that is so condescending that no one wants to go; so they just reassert the system that's already in place. That is deep.

We talked about schools again and again throughout research process. It is a key institutional context in the everyday lives of all of the young women researchers and especially critical at this time in their educational trajectory when they are making decisions and shaping aspirations with regard to their futures. This chapter addresses the tensions between the ideal and reality of schools, between what school promises and what it offers, through young women's stories of their school experiences on the LES. In this section I focus upon the material and institutional conditions of schooling, later in the chapter I address the psychological and social "costs" of negotiation, and the strategies young women adopt in order to navigate this disinvested context.

Schools are contested sites. The ideals of public education embody the promise of democracy, of future opportunity, and even social change. Understood in our society as a key site of social transformation, on the one hand, education is imagined as a ladder to opportunity and social mobility. From this perspective, the "American Dream" is accessible to all if you just work hard enough; the story of rags-to-riches holds undeniable appeal (Ostove & Cole, 2003; Cole & Omari, 2003; Mcleod, 1995; Hochschild, 1995). In fact, education is a key predictor of class position (Bullock & Limbert, 2003). More education consistently translates into higher income across race, gender, and ethnicity groups, even if there are still discrepancies between groups who have the same level of educational attainment (Fine & Burns, 2003, 843-844). Women of color, African American and Hispanic women, college graduates earn more than double than those who drop out of high school, even if they earn equivalent salaries to white men high school graduates. And women of color who have graduated high school still earn less than Black and White men who have dropped out. Regardless, education is correctly understood as very significant factor in access to opportunities and class mobility.

It makes sense then that education is understood as an important stepping-stone in the ideology of achievement, in "making it." As Fine and Burns (2003, 844) state: "Schools are sold as the exit ramp out of poor communities and into the middle class." The dominant discourse insinuates that American society is an equal playing field and that success is due to personal effort and drive, "you can be or do what you want to be if you just work hard enough." As Jasmine articulates: "Like when you're a little kid and you're in school and everybody's like 'oh I want to be the president.' And that crap." In this framework, failure and related economic inequalities is explained as a problem of not applying oneself, of 'misaligned ambitions' (Harris, 2004).

From another perspective, schools are discussed as key sites of social reproduction, maintaining social hierarchies based on race, class and gender, so that working class kids continue to end up in working class jobs, so that people of color and women are kept "in their place," a social and geographical location addressed in terms of race in the Brown vs Board of Education Supreme Court decision which found that "separate was not equal." Theories of social reproduction (McLeod, 1995; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Bourdieu, 1977; Willis, 1977) in education poke holes in the ideology of meritocracy, showing how structural racism and poverty is reinforced in educational practices. Likewise feminist researchers trace how women are shortchanged in schools which maintain and produce social inequities, how for example women continue to do poorly in subjects such as math and science (American Association of University Women, 1995 & 1999). In short, how the production of educational failure and success is gendered, raced, and classed. But what does this look like in everyday practices of schooling? What are the material conditions of structural inequities in educational institutions?

The schools on the Lower East Side are typical in some ways of schools in urban settings across the country. At the national scale, public education is underfunded, racially and economically segregated, and increasingly privatized, now fifty years after the landmark decision of Brown Vs. Board of Education. This takes different forms: "whether we consider urban/suburban finance inequities, the systematic dismantling of desegregation, the racially coded academic tracking that organizes most 'desegregated schools', students' differential experiences of respect and supports in schools, the class, race, and ethnicity based consequences of high stakes testing, or the remarkably disparate patterns of suspensions and disciplinary actions" (Fine et al, 2004b, 78).

Carmen: I think that our school has the worst reputation than any other school.

Ruby: We do

Carmen: They go "oh Posey's¹ bad". I'm like why's my school bad?

Ruby: It's not the schools it's the peoples that the prob--

Carmen: ... for my last job I had to go to a meeting and she was like oh. She wrote down this comment. We had to like write down things that we thought were bad. Like in our neighborhood or something and she wrote down something. And then she says this goes to you cause you go to *that* school. And I was like excuse me? And then later on the day she was like the reason why I wrote this comment was cause your school was in the newspaper for like one of the top ten bad schools or whatever..... I was like that has nothing to do with my school because if you were put in my school in like a different, in the suburbs somewhere, my school would be like one of the top ten best schools in the united states. Or whatever , you know.

Ruby: Yeah.

Carmen: And she goes oh that's true. And I'm like that has to do with how people bring up their children and how people act. That has nothing to do with the school. The school has plenty of offers –I mean me speaking for one, I do not take anything that they offer you.....

Carmen: Like, I think the main thing, it's a zoned school. Like everybody on the lower Manhattan. It's their zoned school.

Ruby: Like everybody touched it.

Everybody, that is, who lives in the area who did not find an alternative. Three of the researchers went to Posey Park. One went to a smaller alternative school, another went to a larger specialized school, and one dropped out of the public education system altogether to home school herself. To begin with my analysis zooms in on the zoned public school not only because it is the 'default' neighborhood high school for kids living on the Lower East Side, but also because it is an obvious, almost exaggerated text book case of a failing public education institution. From this point my analysis zooms out to capture the differential experiences of researchers in a variety of school settings, complicating our analysis across institutional settings even though we find that certainly

many of the issues that are raised at Posey Park are pertinent to the smaller and alternative public schools, and travel to private elite institutions in different forms.

Carmen asks an important question: "why's my school bad?" While Carmen & Ruby offer a contradictory explanation that reproduces stereotypes, placing blame on families and the students (this is discussed later), their comments point to the geography of race and class privilege. They know, if you lived in the suburbs (code=white & wealthy), you probably would attend a better high school, which is defined by having more access to resources and better qualified and paid teachers. The classrooms would probably have less than 25 students per class and certainly the drop out rate would be lower. Probably you would graduate at age 17 and most likely you would head straight for college.

In fact there are real significant differences in schools in urban and suburban areas. Research has documented the disproportionate failures of urban schools where more than twice as many students attend high-poverty schools, in larger classes, larger schools, and with teachers who are less likely to be certified, leading to higher drop out rates (Hochschild, 2003; Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). These issues have been addressed in legal cases on the issue of finance inequity, across the country, and closer to in New York City. In a 2003 ruling of the NYS Court of Appeals, Judge Kaye states: "New York City schools are deficient in instrumentalities of learning... there are certainly city schools where the inadequacy is not 'gross and glaring.' Some of these schools may even be excellent. But tens of thousands of students are placed in overcrowded classrooms, taught by unqualified teachers, and provided with inadequate facilities and equipment. The number of children in these straits is large enough to represent a systemic failure" (Fine et al, 2004b, 79; Hochschild, 2003; Anyon, 1997).

While recent cases on urban-suburban finance inequities point to the systematic failures of the public educational system, the unevenness of urban public education institutions where the “bad schools” are concentrate in poorer neighborhoods is not a new problem. Posey has a history of under-educating its students. Speaking to this point, Annissa offers a historical perspective on Posey Park:

Annissa: A lot of people dropped out from there. My cousin dropped out. Her daughter dropped out

Ruby: from Posey?

Annissa: That school has had a bad deal going on for decades.

Ruby: I just don't understand why though -

Annissa: You know how we were talking about the eighties and Reagan and stock markets..

Ruby: Oh damn. It's happening now.

Annissa: And how twenty years later you see the effects. My sister is 40 years old. She dropped out of Posey twenty years ago. More than twenty years ago. My cousin dropped out over that amount of time, like 25 years ago. My next door neighbor dropped out like 30 years ago. Her daughter dropped out of Posey 2 years ago.

Drop out statistics are tricky to nail down as many students are going into Graduate Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) programs and are not counted as dropping out (Arenson, 2004). As many as 9% of the students at Posey went into GED programs and 19% dropped out in 2003, not including students who were discharged to other schools (New York City Department of Education, 2003). It is hard to ‘track’ student numbers as principals are encouraged to do slippery calculations, to maintain their student numbers and keep their attendance rate high. In these calculations some students are just not counted (For example, Posey had a doubtfully high attendance rate of +80% in 2003 (ibid)) in order to keep their school performance from failing (which it did anyway).

In fact, the G.E.D. has become a viable alternative for many students in New York City. While none of the researchers attended G.E.D. programs, many of their friends did, especially at Posey Park where a fraction of the students graduate in four years. The popularity of the G.E.D. program can be understood as an important critique of the failing public education system. In 2003, more than 37,000 school-age students were in G.E.D. programs run by the school system, a pronounced growth over the year before, a figure that has doubled in the past 15 years (Arenson, 2004). That means that effectively one in 6 high schools students are in a G.E.D. program instead of a regular high school. Now, under the recent federal policy No Child Left Behind, schools have more incentive to discourage weak students from staying; some experts go so far as to suggest that the school system is pushing students into the G.E.D. programs (ibid).

In fact, if you are Black or Latino, New York is the worst state you can live in if you want to graduate in four years. Less than a third of Latino students earn a high school diploma in four years and only 35 percent of Black students in New York graduated on time, faring worse than any other state in the nation (Winter, 2004). And if you live in New York City the situation is even worse (ibid); in comprehensive high schools primarily serving students of color living under the poverty line, freshman classes of between 1200 and 1500 are reduced to senior classes ranging from 67 to 250 students, the drop out rates are shockingly high (Fine & Burns, 2003). And if you go to your zoned high school on the Lower East Side it's even worse. A reported 35% of all students at Posey Park graduate on time, although this figure is disputed by insiders who suggest 25% may be more accurate; if you do the 7 year plan you have a 60% chance of graduating (New York City Department of Education, 2003). And now that the school is being shut down it is assumed that the drop out rate has increased. Who are the students at Posey? Anyone who goes to their zoned high school who lives in the district, this

includes a majority of Latino students, followed by Asian and Black students. The three researchers who attended Posey Park represented the schools' predominant demographics. Less than 2% of the students are white. Still segregated.

Posey Park, situated in a huge building constructed in the late 1920s takes up an entire city block. The building is in need of repair, cited for more than 3 critical violations ("Worst offenders for critical violations," 2004). 2000 + students enter building through security checkpoints manned by NYC policemen. The school is typical of what is identified as "warehoused" education where students are in overcrowded classrooms getting little attention. The clues to the schools lack of resources include old text books and a few old outdated untouched computers at the back of the classroom. In the classrooms, desks are arranged in rows facing the blackboard. In a typical day, students generally have 8 class periods which are 45 minutes long each.

Annis: Unbelievable. What can you learn in 45 minutes? 5 minutes is just getting people to shut the hell up! Right.

Carmen: No. That's 15.

Laughter.

The school's program is organized around basic literacies, employing centrally mandated curricula, and standardized tests, in particular the Regents exams, five of which are required to graduate high school. Posey's orientation towards accountability and regulation is reflective of the neoliberal policy discourses which has dominated the public conversation about education (Lipman, 2003). Within this discursive framework the emphasis upon standards and high stakes tests resonates with public as they propose to turn around and hold accountable a public school system which has consistently failed to educate students. As Lipman argues, "in a system of blatant

inequities, the agenda of standards, tests, and accountability is framed in the language of equality and justice. All students and schools are evaluated by “the same test” and “held to the same standards” (Lipman, 2002, 390).

In 2002, the Posey was on the list of the top ten worst schools in the city, under threat of being shut down due to students' failing test scores (Student test scores are one of a set of indicators for measuring a school's performances) (New York City Department of Education, 2003). Because Posey is on probation due to its poor performance, it is subject to increased regulation and an overwhelming emphasis upon teaching to the test. Lipman argues that the high stakes policies serve to shift responsibility for the failure of public education from the state to the individual (2002, 394). In this regard, the accountability and related pressures 'trickle down' from the state, to the administration, to the teachers, to the students whose failure translates into retention and increased regulation. This in turn contributes to a pervasive negative atmosphere emphasizing the deficits of students and feeding a culture of blame (ibid). Academic standards are low, just enough to get by and pass the test. No time for challenging learning opportunities.

Jasmine: Just learning enough to memorize for the test and then forget about everything else

Jasmine: You just learn enough to pass the test. That's the way most people do it nowadays

Carmen: not even. Half the time they don't even teach you stuff that's going to be on the regents. Or if they do they overteach stuff that's not even.. your not going to use ½ the stuff they teach you. And ½ the stuff that they teach is not even on the regents.

Laughter.

The laughter softens the edges of frustration the researchers articulate, what Fine et al (2004c) identify as “schooling for alienation” to describe the sense the awareness and

anger students have about being denied a quality education. One researcher identifies their desire for “Sufficient education. Never mind wonderful substantive and proactive education” At the same time, the researchers are familiar with the tricks of the trade, and have adopted a practical approach to getting by within the limitations of their schooling.

If you had chosen to go to either the smaller alternative school in your district or a similarly sized specialized school, as Janderie and Jasmine did, your chances of graduating would at least double. At the Medical & Science Services High School, an overcrowded vocationally focused school which places an emphasis upon math and science, most of your peers would pass the English and Math Regents¹; as opposed to at Posey where less than 25% would pass the English Regents and only 35% would pass the Math regents (New York City Department of Education, 2003). Nevertheless, Jasmine “hated every minute of it” echoing similar frustrations and a sense of alienation as articulated by students at the zoned school.

At the smaller alternative school, Community High, your class size may be around 20 students (as opposed to the average of 34 at the larger schools) so you could get special attention. And instead of taking the Regents your curriculum would emphasize writing and you would write many drafts of papers and have to do presentations of your work as part of graduation requirements. Only Janderie expressed pride in her high school, “I loved it,” and continued to maintain close connections with her teachers and the school. Her positive experience at East Side supports recent research on a series of smaller neighborhood based public schools nationwide in poor and working class communities of color which offer a higher quality, rigorous education, facilitate access to opportunities, and cultivate community pride (Ancess, 2000; Fine & Powell, 2001; Fine et al., 2004).

In fact now in the Lower East Side several newer and smaller schools have opened in the past few years. The educational landscape is different from when the researchers started high school in the late 1990s. Many of the smaller and new schools cater to Chinese immigrant students reflecting the changing demographics. A few are also geared towards older students dropping out of traditional high schools, serving as catch basins for schools like Posey Park whose students spill out, in ever increasing numbers especially as it shuts down.

There are also a few new schools developed in partnership with higher educational institutions focusing on engineering or media, and a few slated to open within the next few years as Posey Park closes down. Many of the new schools have long waiting lists for incoming students. It is not clear where many of the neighborhood students will end up going to high school. Perhaps traveling further to attend overcrowded large schools outside of their district. Overcrowding is a severe problem for many of the cities larger schools (Herszenhorn, 2004), Posey and Medical & Science Services High School are two examples of large overcrowded schools where class size sometimes exceeds the maximum of 34 students. Aside from budget cuts reducing the numbers of staff, the increase in the number of smaller schools are identified as one of the reasons for the overcrowding of other schools (ibid). One wonders if the shrinking of schools reflects the gentrification of the neighborhood, as more and more families are displaced from the neighborhood, replaced by a wealthier professional class who have fewer, if any children and can afford to send their children to private schools.

While the deficits in the social and material conditions of the public educational system are supported by dismal statistics, all evidence points to a worsening of the situation as

new federal and state policies, including the “No Child Left Behind” take effect, exacerbating gaps of race, ethnicity and class. Fine and Burns (2003) argue that these policies serve to justify “the withdrawal of economic and political support from poor schools, especially schools serving poor and working class African American and Latino youth. Segregation and integration are political markers that, on the surface concern whose bodies are in the school house. More deeply and perversely, degree of segregation affects the extent to which the state invests in a school or district, based upon whose bodies are (and are no longer) located there” (Fine & Burns, 2003, 842). In short, these policies and practices serve to justify voucher programs and the privatization of public schools particularly in urban areas. Fine and Burns suggest that the withdrawal of emotional and financial support from public education is at the expense of poor and working class students of color. A relevant question in this regard concerns who benefits from the retreat from public schools and ensuing privatization? The impact of substandard education is not significant not only at the scale of the individual, but also at the neighborhood scale, as Jasmine articulates: “If you have a whole bunch of uneducated people in the neighborhood you have nothing.”

Negotiating school and self

What are you learning in school?

“What did you learn in school today, dear little boy of mine?
 I learned that Washington never told a lie
 I learned that soldiers seldom die
 I learned that everybody's free
 That's what the teacher said to me
 And that's what I learned in school today
 That's what I learned in school... “

(excerpt from children's song by Tom Paxton, n.d.)

What did you learn in school today, dear little girl of mine?
 What did you learn in school today, dear little girl of mine?
 It matters what my parents earn
 I'll get better grades with cash to burn
 If I don't speak English I can't be smart
 And no more music and no more art
 And that's what I learned in school today
 That's what I learned in school

(excerpt from Pikku Myy's (2003) revised version of Tom Paxton's song)

What did you learn in school today? The rest of this chapter addresses what young working class women of color are learning about themselves and their world in their experiences of school. In the process of negotiating institutions and ideology, deficit and desire, the researchers construct their subjectivities in partial performances and shifting interpretations, as they try to make sense of confusing experiences. Tracing the analyses that the researchers work through and develop together in discussions throughout their research project, I pay attention to the contradictions the young women articulate and how they strategize to achieve their aspirations despite structural barriers, knowing full well that "things are harder for us." Following I discuss the everyday practices and interpretations young working class women of color develop to get ahead while "playing the game," at the same time addressing the costs associated with negotiating institutions where you are set up to fail.

All of the researchers were involved in school in one way or another, whether on the track to graduating from high school or already finished, in college or about to start. In fact, most of the researchers have plans for more schooling after college, expressing a desire to attain higher degrees in order to achieve their goals. Completely immersed in their educational trajectories, all express a strong belief in the ideals of education, the promise of mobility, opportunity and success. At the same time, however, while

articulating the promise of education and working very hard to realize this, the researchers described the context of social reproduction, of schools that are seriously disinvested, that are not only not serving them, but disserving students. The students' investment is countered by the public education system's disinvestment. Some scholars suggest that in fact schools are not just reproducing race and class inequities but as Fine et al. (2004c) argue: "Far worse, these schools educate poor and working class youth , immigrant youth, and youth of color, away from academic mastery and democracy, toward academic ignorance and civic alienation. Despite the fact that the youth are asking for clean and safe school environments, quality educators and rigorous instruction, the evidence suggests that the more years they spend in their schools, the greater their sense of being ill prepared, angry and mistrustful of the public sphere.. we can ill afford to have youth in, particularly poor and working class youth of color, so in need of higher education, to decide early in their academic careers, that schools are not designed for them." Fine et al. (2005) suggest, in short, that the "civic lessons" young people are learning are an increased alienation and evidence of their social disposability, the "systematic drip feed of deprivation and insult bears academic, civic, and psychological consequences."

The stark structural inequities of school were expressed as deeply felt, personal everyday experiences of the ways in which the stereotypes of 'uneducated' and 'ambitionless' are reinforced in the lives of the young women I worked with.

Ruby: I just don't feel educated. The right way. the way I'm supposed to be. Cause what I wrote on the back –well get to that later is that –they –

CC: Who's they?

Ruby: Like, the school system I'm talking about now. The Board of Education. Cause they think we're so stupid they give us a lower level of education. And we only supposed to use certain books that just gives us the basic idea of what happened in history or whatever. Right? And I think that I deserve more cause in the real world its just so much more complex. And that's again the stereotype. And that's why I just don't feel complete because I don't feel like I'm educated enough to even go to college. It feels funny applying for college--

Annissa: They hype college up so that you feel like you cant attain.. and then you go there and everyone's stupid like you. But your not stupid. But I was amazed to be sitting in classes with people who got 1600 on their SAT's and their stupid. They hype it up. They hype it up so that we cant reach for it.

Ruby: But you understand the feeling. They set it up to only give you the basic facts in school. I don't think that's fair. That's why you get bored. in 11th grade I was like what the hell is this? I was just failing a few of my classes because I just stopped going because it was just too fucking easy- I didn't see it leading -- I need a challenge. I need someone to push me.

Annissa: It's all about a cat eating its tail. They set it up so you get damn bored so you don't go to school. then you wind up failing out looking like an idiot. That's some deep shit. That they could set up a system that is so condescending that no ones wants to go so they just reassert the system that's already in place. That is deep.

Carmen: Maybe just in our school --but in our school you go from one grade to the next and it's like the same shit. Maybe its just cause you know the teachers or whatever, but it's the same thing! You don't go nowhere in my school. They just give you --they just move you up a grade. But it doesn't change. It doesn't-

Ruby: The only thing that I didn't realize is that when you do get higher in grade they start to get um, more indepth in work. You start to understand why Hitler did what he did and what was going on psychologically. Why whoever did what they did. That's what I see. But then with that it's only limited. Cause you only have a little bit of time to go over it. And then they put the Regents out so you could just fail.

Annissa: Machine. You fail. You fail. You fail.

Ruby: 45. 45. 45.

It is a reproductive cycle in which, as the researchers write in their report (Rios-Moore et al., 2004) write: "The relationship between failing institutions and the individual sets external and also internal standards for young women of color, one informing the other."

The “cat eating its tail” is illustrated in their diagram of the relationship between the lack of resources in their community and stereotypes (appendix 4). Poor public education leads to illiteracy, a lack of job opportunities, low wages, and re-asserts the stereotype of ambitionless. Most problematic, as the researchers point out, is that this stereotype is understood as “inherent” or natural, by both outsiders and also by young women, “leaving an indelible mark on their psyches and thwarting the likelihood of ever getting a glimpse of their true capabilities.” On a personal level what this means is that young women feel a sense of personal failure as they try to negotiate failing educational institutions that under-educate them in a context of personal effort and hard work (Rios-Moore et al., 2004). As Ruby worries that she is “academically handicapped,” not well prepared for going to college, other researchers express anger and embarrassment by limited vocabularies and perceptions of inability to “speak properly” as one researcher put it. Aware of their mis-education, the researchers spoke of their worries that they won’t be able to compete with other students from privileged educational backgrounds. In so doing, they embrace stereotypes in their identifications, internalizing the blame and shame at their perception of a lack of educational competency.

The image of the cat eating its tail hints also at the disorientation of young women in an educational system that not only delegitimizes their efforts but also has students blaming themselves for their inability to succeed, taking responsibility for a failing educational system (Rios-Moore, 2004). As an analytic lens, “the cat eating its tail” suggests a self-perpetuating cycle of failure in which young women actively participate, cutting class out of boredom and then failing the exams as Ruby did, reproducing the structure of failure. Repeat mundane performances include being bored, unchallenged, distracted, disrupted, tired, and surrounded by low expectations (Adair, 2002; Delpit, 1995). Day in, day out. Year after year. If a student’s performance may seem passive at first, and

unengaged, as if school is just happening to her, this masks the multiple active ways in which students negotiate experiences of education. The schooling experiences of the six young women involved speaks to a few of variations on a theme reproducing and resisting the stereotypes of 'uneducated,' 'ambitionless,' and 'lazy.' Performances include going through the motions, class after class, feeling mostly uninspired, sometimes even excited, tuning out, falling to sleep at your desk, trying really hard, doing well, cutting class, staying home sick, failing class, going to night school to make up classes, failing the Regents exams, going to summer school to pass the Regents exam, dropping out, taking advantage of many extra-curricular programs (to make up for gaps/holes in schooling), sitting at the front of the classroom, trying to establish positive relationships with your teacher (or even 'kissing ass'), and taking 4, 5, 6 years to graduate. These may be understood as strategies for navigating, tactics for survival (DeCerteau, 1984). Some involve dealing and negotiating head on and others involve exercising other options, such as avoiding the zoned school (like Jasmine) or even going to an alternative school (like Janderie), or trying to avoid altogether the prescribed school route, as Annissa did, choosing to home-school herself after going to several different public schools and one private school.

Evoking Paul Willis's theory of cultural forms and social reproduction (1977, 171-179), this analysis points to the ways in which the performances of bored students faced with low expectations (as discussed previously) serves to reassert structural hegemony. In the following discussion disrupt this fluid performance, as young women express their struggles with feeling and being identified as uneducated:

Carmen:... I talk so stupid sometimes.

Annissa: Hey! You said you talked stupid.

Carmen: Yeah. Cause when you hear it it's like why- why would you talk like that? But then you do it yourself.

Janderie: And when you hear girls talking, 'what up nigger?' I talk like that a lot. And people correct me all the time. ... That's what I mean when I say I don't feel educated. Because I talk like that a lot.

Carmen: Yeah but when you're in here you don't talk like that. So when you are educated you can play two different roles.

Janderie: When you catch yourself it's so disgusting. And, like, my mother be like 'what the hell are you talking about?' And it's ugly. And I'm always- I always try to catch myself, cause I talk like that all the time.

Ruby: Ain't you been here before? (in a mocking ghetto slang)

Laughter

Janderie: You sound so uneducated. And that's like the stereotype. When people hear you talk like that they think that you're ignorant.

Acknowledging their role in perpetuating stereotypical performances, at the same time the young women critique and complicate this practice. While on the one hand, some of the young women consciously (and unconsciously) talk in a way they think sounds 'ugly' or sounds 'stupid,' they also express a sense of shame in terms of how they might be perceived by others.

Although the young women acknowledge their role in reproducing stereotypes, in contrast to Paul Willis's analysis, the "cat eating its tail" places responsibility upon how the institution 'sets them to fail,' as opposed to the students. Despite this insight, the young women lack a wider perspective which would locate their experience within a larger social and political context. In this regard, another apt metaphor might be 'seeing the trees for the forest,' to capture the students' personal interpretation of what is a wide scale social problem for urban African American and Latino students. Identified in the literature as the "Achievement Gap," the disparities in education have been re-dubbed

as the "Race, Class, and Opportunity Gap," to reflect the institutional failures of the educational system to serve students of color nationwide (Fine et al, 2004b; Valenzuela, 1999; Anyon, 1997).

A related performance is the "model minority, the one who rises against all odds and is held up as what is possible, validating the achievement ideology by implying that if you just worked hard enough you could succeed despite your disadvantaged circumstances. The model minority is one of the "well advertised few" (Fine & Burns, 2003). She is not supposed to use her graduation speech to highlight the problems in her school, problems such as overcrowding, ineffective teaching and the high turnover of principals. For this, you can be punished. This is what Tiffany Schley, 2004 valedictorian of High School for Legal Studies in Brooklyn did, and subsequently she was temporarily denied her diploma, the Board of Education spokesman explaining "Our information was that her farewell address did not receive universal support" from the audience of other students and their parents, only to have it reinstated by Mayor Bloomberg the following week (Gootman, 2004). Tiffany Schley, voted most likely to succeed by her class, took the opportunity to disrupt the dominant discourses of meritocracy and expose the underbelly of her success.

Of course, not all performances of education are so limiting. The school experience is not monolithic. Each day there may even be successive, sustained periods of inspiring, engaged learning. Despite an overwhelming negativity and disinvested atmosphere, most young women still expressed loving aspects of school, loving particular teachers who encouraged and who inspired different performances, revised aspirations. In fact all professed a real love of learning, a love of discovery and of being challenged. However that was not what typified many of the researchers' school experiences. What positive

experiences stand out in their discussions include an arts infused curriculum at the alternative school which kept students challenged, interested, and involved even after school; a photography class where students learned dark room skills and had creativity in interpreting their assignments; an English class with an encouraging teacher who selected books relevant to students' lives; and a social studies teacher who addressed social issues and "even spoke about race relations." Researchers expressed how schools became more vibrant with programs offerings, particularly art programs in and after the school day. Young women attending smaller and alternative schools in particular expressed more positive experiences of education overall, and discussed the active ways in which they were engaged in learning, confirming the wealth of research that shows how smaller schools are more effective learning environments, with higher graduation rates, and fewer drop outs (Ancess, 2000; Fine & Powell, 2001). One example along these lines is how Carmen, after dropping out of her zoned school, transferred to a small alternative school in the neighborhood which emphasized writing and critical thinking. Soon after Carmen started to talk about her education in an active voice, like she owned it. Now when she talks about school Carmen discusses what she's learning (as opposed to the familiar litany of complaints about unfair teachers), she talks about books, and about the papers she's writing. And finally, Carmen passed her English Regents. She had taken the test a few times before unsuccessfully. She was really proud of herself. Carmen attributed her success in part due to her study of Kafka's Metamorphosis in her English class and the fact that she had been reading a lot this year in school. Now she has only one more semester before graduating. "I am so happy. ... And also, I wanted to call you to tell you -- I made the honor roll. I never did that before in my life. I am soooo happy. So happy. "Carmen had worked really hard this year." "And you know what. I really got a reality check. The other day my sister bumped into some of my friends from Posey Park (the zoned school she dropped out of) and they

are all getting their G.E.D.s. I was like, that could have been me. That definitely could have been me.” Escape narrative.

Strategizing success

So the way I see it for like right now is that you can get the house...you can get your car and stuff like that. But once you're settled and grounded, go back to either your community or the community that you're in and educate the people who are there on what's going on and what they need to know. Or just educate them on reading up on and just learning how to read or reading up on politics and stuff like that. Cause that's like making a move and making sure that they understand and want to do something about it. You know it's one thing to just go in and, you know, 'let me tell you this and this is going on, okay? Bye.' That's one thing. Another thing is to stay there and help them, you know, learn and understand and make a movement about it, you know? So I think that's what could be done to change the whole system cause a lot of —a lot of um people who've tried it weren't very successful because of one reason or another. Like they didn't stay. Or the people who were backing them were back-stabbing them or some crap like that but they already have many cases of people who've actually been able to change. Or actually stayed to change anything.

Describing an idealistic vision of education as part of larger movement of social transformation, Jasmine articulates a position shared by many students of color who overwhelmingly are invested in social change (Cole & Omari, 2003; Cousins, 1999). Social change is described here as staying in the community and giving back to the community. Community in this regard is thus defined both geographically and socially, as a location, one's own neighborhood or other neighborhoods like yours where people like you —poor and of color—live. This perspective is grounded in the legacy of civil rights and social justice movements spearheaded by people of color (Kelly, 2002), who “paved the way for us to be here,” as Ruby put it. While most of the researchers shared a desire to give back the community, there were differences regarding whether or not it was one's responsibility and the scale of responsibility. Differences also involved, how to give back to the community and at what point in one's life. Should you first attain your

personal goals? The material trappings of the good life? Are you in a better position to give back when you are financially stable? Ongoing conversations between the researchers reflected the tensions between an ideology of “success” reflected in economic terms and an ‘ethic of care’ (Gilligan, 1982) foregrounding one’s commitment to the community.

Differences aside, that the issue of the responsibility to ‘uplift’ the community was a recurrent topic of conversation is itself notable, and serves to “expand our notion of what constitutes upward mobility” (Fine & Burns, 2003; Cole & Omari, 2003; Gaines, 1996). This discussion is reflective of a larger discourse within African-American and Latino communities (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999), although certainly there is no consensus perhaps due in part to differential definitions of what constitutes the community. Significantly, this discourse is missing from the larger social context, which raises the question, following April Burns (2004), of why people of color bear the responsibility for social and educational inequities? Why is segregation, whether it be residential, educational and otherwise, understood primarily as an issue for communities of color rather than an issue of larger social, geopolitical forces? This line of questioning requires a broader perspective that takes into account the ways in which privileges of race and class are maintained at institutional and structural scales (Aspen, 2004b).

As mentioned previously, all of the researchers involved expressed a firm belief in the “American Dream,” in the idea that if you worked hard enough you would be successful, even if at the same time this understanding was framed by a critique of social and structural inequities based on race and class (Cole & Omari, 2003). Education is identified key to realizing the American Dream, which was defined differently. Dreams

included “changing the world,” a house with a pond, a “Sex in the City” style fantasy of the nice job with the little suit and shopping at lunch with one’s friends, not having to work in particular jobs on the one hand, and on the other being able to pursue one’s professional aspirations such as becoming an art teacher, a travel agent, a psychologist, or a doctor. Articulated dreams included having time for oneself, educating the community, and opening up an orphanage for children. All aspirations involved further schooling, whether education is seen as a vehicle for personal change, for a better life for one’s family, or for community and social change.

Ruby: I want to hurry up and get this degree so I be making my \$50,000 a year. I’m not even interested in optamologist dispensing. Who the fuck cares?

Laughter

Annissa: That’s what she’s learning.

Ruby: I don’t care. All I care about is when I get out in two years I’ll be 19 and I’ll get \$50,000

Janderie: it doesn’t matter if you don’t enjoy what you do.

Ruby: No my main goal is taking my doctorate in child psychology and that’s what I’m trying to pay for. So, I mean, I’m sacrificing two years of my life, but in return I’ll be getting the money that I want. I don’t care about-- I mean it’s a good school-- who the fuck cares about optamologist dispensing? Nobody. I didn’t know a year ago. I swear I did not know.

Jasmine: You are smooth.

Ruby: Who cares about what you’re doing? I need the money.

Annissa: There are other jobs that could do the same shit --

Ruby: This is the first one that I found. I kinda like it. Yeah.

Annissa: You said yourself you’re doing it because of the money.

Ruby : Yes because I’m not going to allow my brothers and sister to go to public school anymore. That’s the bottom line. They’re going to private school and I don’t care who says but we’re going to buy a house and we’re going to have trees behind it and we’re going to live the American dream to our best ability!

laughter

Annissa: Goddamn it!

Ruby: ..You do what you have to do and I want them (her brothers) to learn that you have to do whatever the hell you have to fucking do. Yes Ruby is going to college. Yes Ruby is going to college and I am going to be a college student no matter what I practice when I get out I'm going to be making my own fucking money. I'm going to be doing what I believe I have to do to fucking survive. I'm going to move down to Washington DC. Look at the Capital Hill all the fucking time so I can get more involved; so I can be more with me and be able to do what I have do. I am going to break down those doors . I don't care. Whatever I have to do to make sure that my family is just going to be alright. God forbid whenever I go. And that's what I have to do. I don't care about CUNY. I don't want to go to CUNY. But when I was sitting in that class, that vision technology class in Posey Park high school when I was sitting in there and he said \$45,000 all I heard--

Carmen: Chi ching!

Ruby: your damn right. that's what it has to be. Who,who—what nineteen year old makes that kind of money?

Wrapped in Ruby's plan is the realization of her own personal goal of becoming a child psychologist, taking care of her family, and achieving the American Dream Hollywood style complete with a house and trees in the back. Her goals involve both social and geographical mobility for her and her family. Going to college is a big deal. It represents financial independence which is connected to the overwhelming responsibility she feels for her brothers (to deliver them from the problems of public education she experienced) and her family. Referencing "Capital Hill," Ruby speaks of getting involved, suggesting social change in the form of laws or government policy, in order to "break down those doors," doors which represent access to opportunities long denied. Going to college is a big deal.

Keeping her "eyes on the prize" is a strategy Ruby uses to keep her motivated. For most students school is a means to an end, to "making it," however defined, to getting where one wants to go. It is a strategic move. Within this framework, going to school and negotiating school could be compared with 'playing a game' as articulated by one

researcher; a game which involves strategy, not just following the rules. If rules are guidelines for behavior, which make explicit the values and meanings of a social setting (Wood & Beck, 1994), strategies are the 'internal manipulations of a system—that of language or that of an established order' (DeCerteau, 1984, 24). They are what *you actually do*, as opposed to *what you should* or *should not do*. Strategies are tactics, constantly being invented as young women interpret and act in their everyday experiences. Listening to the narratives of young women of color's experiences of school reveals the tension between implicit and explicit rules and young women's strategies for 'playing the game.'

Following Annissa uses the metaphor of the game to describe her experience at a private educational context of an all women's college.

Annisca: This idea that we have to follow a certain set of rules. Its that whole A to B thing. That there's this straight line that everyone is supposed to get on. It's like it's the rat race and it's not even your game. I can't say that this is my game. It's not my game. I didn't make up the rules and I didn't even make the decision. There's not agency. There's hardly any free will at all-- you know?

Janderie: What kind of free will do you want? Like, you know what I'm trying to ask?

Annisca: Yeah I totally do. All of us in order to get our goals what do we say – well I need to go to college. We don't question that. 'I have to go to college in order to get that.' Except what is involved in going to college? 4 years of your life or more. Following other people's rules. Writing papers the way they want you to write them. Taking the classes they say you have to take. Taking the loans they say you have to take. Winding up with more debt later. Your 18 you have no worries. Your 22 you have \$60,000 debt, you know, like in 4 years. How is that agency? You don't even have the choice.

Ruby: Don't--you gonna make me cry. Don't even talk about it.

You have to play the game if you want to succeed, as Indra noted, but this doesn't feel like a choice, as she says, 'there's not agency.' The game analysis reveals an awareness of the social structure which is experienced as neither natural nor rational (Wood & Beck, 1994). This analysis represents a line of vision which could be understood as a strategy for psychic self-preservation which allows one to get through the day, or four years of college. In fact there is an agency implied, but it is an agency of retreat, a conscious decision to play by the rules in order to achieve one's goal.

The metaphor of the game functions on two levels; on the one hand it is a strategy of success and achieving the American dream –or even just 'getting to average' (Gates, 2004), getting through school and getting a job. On the other hand, the analysis of the game proposes an incisive critique of raced and classed social inequities. The game analysis could be understood as a strategy of dual consciousness, a strategy which speaks in "contradictory registers" about wanting to succeed in the very institutions which they feel betrayed by, aiming for the American dream, even as they identify structural barriers to opportunities.

.. I want to have a piece of it. But why do I want to have a piece of it? You know how it's that whole thinking outside the box while you're in it. That is the challenge for us. We live a harder life than they do. They created it. The rules are for them. They live the rules. Those rules are created against us and yet we have to live that way. Our vocabulary supplied by them.

Calling attention to how rules function to maintain structural hierarchies and are part of everyday practice Annissa's comments recall Bourdieu's conceptualization of the habitus (1977), of how everyday practices reproduce and embody the social structure through social interaction (Foucault, 1975). Rules can be understood in Bourdieu's terms as socially mediated directives for behavior, bounded by invisible but implicit social

understandings of what is desirable and what is necessary. The rules serve a disciplinary function that prevents disruption of the social order (Foucault, 1975), keeping students focused on getting through school, working hard without questioning the structural inequities, surveilling themselves and buying into the American dream. But for many students, these rules, the everyday practices which sustain the social order, may be more visible than theorized by Bourdieu, as Annissa's comments suggest. Perhaps the rules are not so easily internalized or embodied (Butler, 1999) by those for whom the "rules are created against us" and experienced as an everyday struggle and internal and external pressures. Breaking the rules, such as dropping out or getting pregnant, is not only burdened with a sense of responsibility, you should have known better, but also with the threat of social exclusion from the public sphere and the economy. The stakes are high.

Analyzing the rules from a perspective informed by dual consciousness, Annissa makes explicit rules which are implicit. She makes visible the invisible structures of ideology, "the box" you struggle to think outside of while still in, even while ways of understanding (our vocabulary) are informed by this ideology. Ruby's comments reveal a similar awareness, also informed by the split vision of dual consciousness, although for her the game is a project of racialization (Omi & Winant, 2002):

Ruby: What I'm doing --I do have dreams where I just want to like take a big ass building and put all orphans in it and just help them and pay for their college tuition. And stuff like that. No I'm serious I really do have dreams like that. But I am not going to be able to do that if I don't have no fucking money. And if I'm not playing the white man's game.

Annissa: Amen. Amen

Ruby: And go to college and get my masters and whatever kind of fucking degree I need to make all these millions of dollars in the future. I'm not going to have it. And this is just a foot in the door. So I'm going to play the little game. I'm

going to play the game. I'm going to get rich white friends. I'm going to allow them --I am going to let them support me and in the meantime I'm going to be stabbing them in the back because it's what they did to me for the last hundred years I've been on this earth. I'm going to play that game.

Annissa: That's deep man.

Ruby: I'm going to play their game. I'm going to say hi to the nice little white chick in the hallway cause her father might have a little bit of money.

Laughter

Placed front and center of the researchers' analysis, Whiteness is marked and made visible and a focus for anger about disenfranchisement, legacies of slavery, and an understanding of their compromised situations due to structural racism. Often referred to in an ambiguous "they", Whiteness becomes a shorthand to refer to difference, signifying power, class privilege, and a history of betrayal at the institutional and individual level. The analysis of the game is in effect, a re-framing of the problem. It's someone else's game. The game, which is alternately called "the white man's game," is not a level-playing field. It is not a meritocracy. But you still have to play it if you want to succeed. The game offers another lens of analysis for understanding young women's experiences of school, in this case addressing the negotiation of white privilege and structural racism and poverty. Privilege and disadvantage are understood relationally, as mutually defining processes which take different forms in different settings. So for example, Whiteness and privilege may be more prominent at an elite women's college, whereas deficit and disinvestment are flagrantly conspicuous in the public zoned high school on the Lower East Side, as discussed previously. Negotiating entitlement and disinvestment requires different strategies, even though in this analysis they are understood to be part of the same game. Two sides of the same coin.

“Things are harder for us”

Certainly the experiences of young women demonstrate the limitations of the logic of the ‘American Dream,’ that if you work hard enough you will succeed, but nevertheless all of the researchers continue to articulate the promises and desire of education and make plans accordingly, investing more of their time and resources into schooling and reiterating a discourse of personal effort at the same time that they express an outrage at the betrayal of institutions which are inequitable, inadequate, and underserving them. Articulating a desire to succeed and achieve in the very institutions that they critique, the researchers engaged Du Bois’s critical dual consciousness (1989) to account for the contradictions of their personal experiences. But even as “contradictions are fundamental to the struggle to survive within, while also trying to change, economic and social relations in America,” Fine et al. (2004c) and other scholars (Valenzuela, 1999, Solorzano & Yosso ; 2001) also worry at the same time about the loss of a sense of agency on the part of students who are demoralized and stressed by their educational experiences.

Within public educational settings, accountability for school failure has been shifted to students in the form of school probation, grade retention, and the public scrutiny of high stakes testing (Lipman, 2003). In this highly charged context the students’ self-regulation and internalized surveillance is certainly understandable. In discussions of their educational experiences, the researchers would shuttle in between individual and structural explanations, taking responsibility for personal failure on the one hand and articulating structural constraints on the other. The analysis suggested by the “cat eating its tail” is a way of naming this split vision, one that identifies the transactional

relationship between students and their institutional context, where internal and external standards are mutually produced. It is here, at the interface of the dialectic of agency and structure that young women negotiate and struggle within structural constraints. The struggle is felt as deeply personal, as mentioned before, it is accompanied by an understanding that subtle and overt forms of racism and poverty are part of a pervasive and historic context of inequality that they have to contend with.

But even while mobilizing a discourse of personal responsibility and individual accountability, the researchers did not endorse a color-blind educational policies. Simply put, "Things are harder for us," as one researcher stated; "us" meaning working poor and working class people of color. Here they articulate a sense of "relative deprivation" (Crosby et al, 1986 cited in Fine et al., 2004c), the discrepancy between what people believe they deserve and what they receive, what they don't have and others do, coupled with the perception that White and wealthy students receive better (Boyd-Franklin, 1999, cited in Fine et al., 2004c). Recall Carmen 's comments earlier on where she suggests that if "you were to put my school in like a different, in the suburbs somewhere, my school would be like one of the top ten best schools," suggesting that privileged neighborhoods have better schools, that somewhere else students are receiving a better education than her. For Carmen this is exemplified by her cousins who live in Colorado and who at the age of 17 have already graduated and are on their way to college. Carmen feels left behind by comparison. "It makes me feel stupid or something. How, like, part of your family progresses and you don't? It's like to me – like, I almost started to cry. I was like, what?! I'm still in high school. I still need two more years! I'm like No! No! No! It can't be. No!"

While the researchers did subscribe to an achievement ideology, they did not validate the hierarchy of a meritocracy where those who made it succeeded because they have worked harder. The hierarchy of success is seen through the lens of structural racism and class. Appropriating and expanding the discourse of ambition and personal effort, young women apply a nuanced application of the achievement ideology to their interpretation of the structural constraints of the disinvested, substandard educational sites they have to deal with. Not only do you have to work hard to succeed, in actual fact you have to work harder than your White or wealthy counterparts. On the personal level, in order to succeed it is necessary to stay focused and apply yourself to negotiate this context.

Annissa: You know you have to work it.

Ruby: You just have to stay focused. You cant go in that school half --

Annissa: It's like trying to stay focused in a circus, you know? It's like you have all this shit going on around you and your not even supposed to look it.

Solorzano and Yosso (2001, cited in Ayala, 2003), theorize this as "endurance labor" which they defined as "the relentless drive to persist in spite of and many times because of adversity," to describe the ongoing challenges of marginalized students who strive towards academic success. Echoing the famous civil rights song "we shall overcome" structural racism and poverty are identified in personal terms as what needs to be negotiated in their everyday schooling experiences. What is difficult is not necessarily the schoolwork in itself, what requires extra reserves of self-esteem and perseverance, is the negotiation of this toxic environment. It is hard work just to come to school, to be surrounded by low expectations day after day, to be undereducated, and to be aware. The researchers' discourse of personal effort is not then an endorsement of what Fine &

Burns identify as “banal meritocracy,” the everyday practices through which we come to understand the social world as “natural,” and reproduce the ideology of “hard work breeds success,” through performances of deficit (Fine & Burns, 2003, 845). Instead the researchers weave in a critique along lines of race and class, in contradictory registers, articulating the tensions of their position.

Stress-ing success

Ruby: But I just don't feel I should have to change the way I am--

Janderie: You don't have to.

Ruby: ---For someone else that don't feel comfortable with who they are. And I'm not. I'm not! You can never live your life for what other people want you to be. You always have to be yourself. Cause you have to wake up and look at yourself in the mirror everyday. I can't do it.

Annis: And you do what you do to get through what you have to get through.

Annis: You have to know who you are when you go to bed.

Ruby: And be comfortable with that. No matter what I say I have to be comfortable with myself. And the way I'm doing it. And people may not agree with it, but you're not me. I'm not you. And I have to be the -- that I think is right.

Wrapped around stories of strategizing success, of playing the game, taking risks and aiming to win, another narrative is present which speaks to the tensions between desires of high achievement, of another better life, and related fears of losing oneself, one's connection to community, and one's identifications with family and culture (Cole & Omari, 2003; Collins, 2000, hooks, 2000). Expressing ambivalence, stress, and identifying the potential damage involved in ‘playing the white man's game’, the researchers refuse a too smooth story of success, calling attention to the psychological, social, and economic consequences of structural inequities in the education system.

In so doing, they highlight a critique and raise critical questions: What are the psychological and personal costs of success? Does high achievement, “making it” = renunciation of culture, race, and self-identifications? What is the distance between “you do what you have to do to get through what you have to get through”, and “you always have to be yourself cause you have to wake up and look at yourself in the mirror everyday?” This is the articulated struggle, the tension between criss-crossing identifications which pull you in multiple directions at once. Success in this sense can be imagined as an identity crisis, which might be a transformative juncture or a nervous breakdown.

This is the Catch 22 of negotiating the production of success and failure. Not only is following the rules difficult, but it may not guarantee success. Or it may call into question how we define success (Fine & Burns, 2003; hooks, 2000). Bound up with aspirations for the American dream, the house, the car, middle class status and all the trappings of this lifestyle, success is associated with Whiteness, suburbia, wealth. The flipside, failure = poverty, disinvestment, deficit, and is invariably attached to the bodies of “the other”, urban communities of color. Witness the reproduction of the stereotype of deficit, of lazy and on welfare, of ambitionless, of uneducated. Within this framework high achievement and academic success, the hallmarks of the model minority performance, are identified as “acting white” or “selling out.” Not only a not so subtle means of policing racial borders, of trying to keep people “in their place,” assertions of “acting white” and “selling out” express the struggle young women feel caught in the middle between aspirations and self-preservation, between identifications with home, family, community, and school (Cole & Omari, 2003).

Within this framework playing the game and trying to follow the rules necessarily involves crossing borders for young working class women of color. Be warned: moving between different life spaces is dangerous, it may be destabilizing. "Borders are set up to define places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them" (Anzaldúa, 1990, 25). Crossing the borders then is treacherous work and getting caught is traumatic, as expressed in this recollection from one researcher's experience as a 7th grade "trespasser" in a private school.

Annissa: and I say 'I wanted to ask you where the bathroom was.' And she's like 'you wanted to what?' 'I wanted to ask you where the bathroom was?' And she's like 'you wanted to what?' and I was like 'are you deaf? I wanted to ask you where the bathroom was.' She was like 'here we don't say axe cause you don't chop someone up when you go to the bathroom; you say ask.'

Carmen: what?

Ruby: I won't ever forget that in my entire life. Ever ever.

Janderie: I would have axed her head off!

Lesson learned: to cross the border you need "mestiza consciousness", to know how to code-switch, and move between different languages, cultures, and identifications (Anzaldúa, 1990; Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Annissa: Except sometimes when you can use that language and then blow their minds. Sometimes I'll just fuck it up.

Laughter.

Annissa: I'll be like "you know what I'm saying. Like, you know, when you .. And try to tell me I'm, but actually I was considering this hypothesis. Blah blah blah!

Laughter.

Annissa: People don't expect it. That's comes in handy. Remember what we were talking about having two languages. That shit comes in handy.

Janderie: Yeah nigga please.

Laughter.

Shifting fluently between two different positions, the young women reveal the fluidity of their subjectivities and dislodge the fixity of stereotypes. Code-switching can be used as a way of taking back control. It is a critical strategy for working class student of color who find that they must be multilingual in order to pass through and graduate. Finagling fluency, the young women learn and perform the rules of others games :

Annisca: ..At school I speak in a different language. And it's not a language I'm comfortable with. Like I can't even say that in when I'm in school I'm being myself. Now I'm here I can be myself and I can say 'self-characterization' and I can say 'self-characterization' as opposed to 'self-characterization' (carefully enunciating each syllable in a higher feminine voice). you know. I have to be very careful about how I pronounce my words, what accent I use. People are like 'what did you say?'

Annisca: *This delineates the line of intimacy and total lack of intimacy. If I can speak to you this way, I'm intimate with you. In a social level. It may not mean I want to know your business and blah blah, but we're socially intimate. If I'm speaking to you in this manner (she speaks again enunciating her words carefully) I really -*

Ruby: I don't care for you.

Annisca: I don't care of you. I don't know you. And I don't trust you because you're probably going to judge me. And in school that's the way I have to be because it's their world. Not my world. ...But in my community I'm viewed as a freak because I have a vocabulary. Well they can sit on that too. Because I'm not going to be able to -- Like I cant speak three languages on top of Spanish too. I'm sorry. And that's the way the cookie crumbles. That doesn't mean that I don't care about my people. Even if they're busy kicking me while I'm down.

Fluid performances of shifting selves belies the internal friction and the feelings of exclusion and inclusion connected with self-expression. It's uncomfortable. Feeling like a "freak" at home, feeling "not myself" and a lack of intimacy at school, Annisca addresses her painful experiences of feeling alone and betrayed in her negotiation of spaces of

privilege and deficit. Articulating the challenge of self-preservation, of maintaining sanity, and persevering in a hostile environment (aka elite liberal private women's college in the northeast), Annissa exposes the fiction of the model minority performance, as she emphasizes the pain and emotional struggles of 'survival.'

Annissa: a lot of the girls who come to my school don't stay. They wind up leaving. Getting there is only ½ the journey. Staying there is another part of it. Getting good grades is just another thing on top of that. ... Last year was a really hard year at my school because there were a lot of death threats to black women. and I guess there was just a swarm of signs everywhere saying "die nigger die." "Die dyke die." It was a real big deal and lot of people had nervous breakdowns. We had like 20 girls go to the mental ward.

Carmen: There's a mental ward? Crazy.

Annissa: We have like a whole section of ***, which is the local hospital. And our girls just go straight in and most of them are women of color.

Annissa: Its hard work. and a school like *** is a very hard school. it's a tough school and you just- people crack I guess. And so we had a really really rough year..... Anyway long story short we had to do a sit in at the college hall. We had to protest. We had to start a petition. We had to do all these things and it was a lot of hard work and a lot of grief involved and more women of color had to go off to the psych ward. And I thought I was going to be one of them. I really thought I was going to be one of them. And then that doesn't even caught the drama involved in just being a woman of color already.

Like in the gentrifying context of their neighborhood, here too the young women negotiate the borderlands so eloquently described by Anzaldúa in chapter 4. While the borders may be more obvious, and certainly more visible in an elite privileged context (where you are one of a handful of women of color in a sea of white bodies), all of the researchers' experiences of school were segregated. And in their negotiations of, and striving for, academic success, all of the researchers were familiar with living in this borderland, a no man's land where you feel like an interloper, never comfortable, always on your toes, unwelcome. Articulating these experiences, swapping war stories of

educational unrest, the researchers in effect denaturalized the familiar back drop of structural inequities and identified what was problematic in their schooling experiences. For example, being the only African American to take the advanced placement mathematics exam, or being told 'you are on the 5 year plan' your first day of college without an explanation.

What then are young women learning in their experiences of school? To navigate between deficit and privilege, to steer clear of danger or to dive into it head first. how do you stay afloat ?

But I'm going to get my education because I value education not because it's something that I feel obligated to do and I'm going to do things that make me feel good. And somehow I'm going to combine what I want to do with my ideals with my hopes, with my aspirations with my desire to help others, whatever drives you. Sharisse whatever drives you is different from what drives me and Toni you know you want something different. You know Eve's about getting her shit and I'm about getting my shit too. But I have to preserve a certain amount of my dignity. I'm not going to sell out in a way that's not good for me. Like I think selling out, like when we talk about what selling out means, it means something different for every person. Like, for some people it's like moving out your hood, for some people it's back-stabbing. For me, it's doing something that goes against my heart. And for my heart I can't live the way they do. What-what am I gaining? What am I gaining?

What are you willing to give up to get to where you want to go? If to 'sell out' is to give up part of yourself, it is a conscious erasure of self- identification. One researcher defines identifications in geographical terms—'moving out of your community;' social terms—'back-stabbing' your people; and individual terms —'going against my heart.' Articulating the push and pull between aspirations and self-preservation, she identifies the complexity of her position as young working class woman of color, and as a student. She follows in the footsteps of many women of color who in reflecting upon their educational experiences address shared issues of alienation, isolation, of having to deal

with ethnocentric biases across the curriculum and suffer cultural assaults in educational environment characterized by whiteness and class privilege (Ayala, 2003; hooks, 2004; Perez, 1999; Collins, 2000).

At what cost?

Defying a color blind dominant discourse, instead the young women speak eloquently of the strain of “subtractive schooling” (Valenzuela, 1999) which reproduces deficit, of the sustained injuries from playing the game, the struggle of following rules you didn’t create, of selling out, and still striving, against all odds—the odds “of the color line” W.E.B. Du Bois called attention to (which of course have nothing to do with chance, statistics, etc.). It is here, on this line, the borderline that young women construct their subjectivities, balancing carefully so as “not to be detained on one side” or “exiled from another” (Ayala, 2003). From this space young women speak articulately about what it feels like to be constructed as a problem, and in so doing they offer an insightful social and institutional critique of public and private education, in effect re-framing the problem. Their commentaries drip with outrage and longing: “Youth speak at once through a discourse of searing social critique and, at the same time, they yearn for a quality education in the system in which they experience a sense of betrayal” (Fine & Burns, 854). Embracing ambivalence, offering contradictory interpretations, young working class women of color re-configure themselves in shifting performances that offer evidence of a dual or ‘hybrid consciousness’ (Guishard, 2003 cited in Fine & Burns, 2003). In one moment a young woman deconstructs the structural problems of her school, in the next she feels stupid for not speaking “proper English,” frustrated at the poor quality of education, feeling bored and unchallenged, and still working towards, and dreaming of, a better and brighter future. At once she challenges and reproduces deficit

representations which blame her for her mis-education. Her analysis is deepened and contextualized within the collective engagement of the Makes Me Mad project

Articulating differences across the spectrum of their very different schooling experiences, in disinvested and elite private contexts, the researchers collectively collaborate on an analysis that jumps scales. The analysis is developed at the intersections of their subjectivities, a shared identification which forefronts their experiences of discrimination based on race and class *within* and *across* particular material, social and economic conditions. Building upon the researchers' critique, I wonder, following Ayala (2003,18), "what it would look like if educational institutions displayed a mestiza consciousness?"

In conclusion, in the spirit of the Makes Me Mad project, I end with recommendations based upon a material analysis of structural disadvantages which have implications for the subjectivities of young women, as I have discussed in this chapter. I offer these compiled insights based on the researcher's discussions in the following list of "recommendations for school change." These are practical suggestions for creating more positive student performances for young working class women of color based on the theoretical understandings developed throughout this chapter. In addition, I have also included the insightful list of educational needs the research team identified in the Makes Me Mad report (appendix 3; Rios-Moore et al., 2004).

Recommendations for school change

1. Express high expectations for all students which valorize social constructions young people as "assets" and "agents of change" not as deficits.
2. Provide opportunities to acknowledge and address the pain and struggle of young women's everyday experiences.

3. Develop student-centered curricula that starts with students' personal experiences as a way to discuss broader social issues connected to young people's lives including issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality and how they play out in the everyday lives of the students.
4. Create opportunities for independent and collaborative project-based learning where students are actively engaged in discovery and learning and a sense of ownership.
5. Schools need to be part of the larger community of the neighborhood, engaging families in the community (see El Puente model), and using the community as a resource for learning about history, social issues, and subjects such as math, science etc (see Cooper-Hewitt, Learning by Design curriculum).
6. Create a space and opportunities for students to exchange information about their interests.
7. Build upon documented successes in small schools, including smaller class sizes.
8. Offer more guidance and advisement throughout the education process as to next steps, career options—and what schooling is necessary to achieve particular career goals; how to apply for school and financial aid, and higher education options.
9. Create a supportive learning environment which is respectful of young people's needs and out of school life experiences and responsibilities.
10. Offer programs to support the needs of young people in higher education. (Ayala, 2003)
11. Students want to relate to their teachers. This might mean hiring teachers from the neighborhood, teachers who are also of color, or teachers who are comfortable addressing social issues significant to the students.
12. Place less of an emphasis upon teaching to the test. More of an emphasis upon writing and critical thinking skills. On making connections. On understanding.
13. The arts! Most of the positive experiences young women articulated in their school experiences had to do with the arts.
14. Restore equitable funding to urban public schools.
15. Desegregate schools for real (Fine et al., 2004b).
16. The schools need to take on a mestiza consciousness (Ayala, 2003)

From the Makes Me Mad report (Rios-Moore et al., 2004):

Education Needs

- Preservation and restoration of local libraries and increased funding for multi-lingual and multi-cultural library programming Increased funding for affordable daycare.
- Increased funding and resources to improve the quality of public education and student attendance programs.
- Increased education health facilities, health and wellness, child abuse awareness, elder abuse awareness, and domestic violence programs.
- Increased funds for public health outreach and prevention programs to raise community awareness.
- Information about important women that are not characterized as feminists.
- Lack of resources in school – more enrichment programs.
- Information about important women in our community or lives reflected in education programming.

- Teachers that young community residents can relate to (now the majority are white), resources that relate to young women and men of color, opportunities for families to be a bigger part of the school process for their children.
- Literacy programs to combat the insufficient schooling.
- Smaller schools. The recent trend of housing many smaller boutique schools in one building still has the same problems of warehouse schooling.
- Getting to college is one issue, but staying is another. College Prep programs that help youth deal with negotiating the systems that are already at colleges for people who have knowledge of them from the start. Prep programs that help new students from the community negotiate classist structures, culture shock, develop study habits, build credit, negotiate school loans, financial aid, and make the best use of the resources that are supplied by college. A support system for kids once they get there.
- Programs for children with learning disabilities, which are designed against the traditional Special Education model.
- Ethics courses

Chapter 6.

The personal is political: Developing 'new' subjectivities through participatory action research

I've tried the past the six years of my life to figure out how to educate myself and find the means of using the tools/status attached to education. At certain points I've been asked to stop and reflect on the journey thus far. But this project has been the most thorough process of questioning that I've participated in thus far. Like stopping to ask –how am I viewed by the world? How do I view myself? How am I misunderstood? A whole other deep critique of a process of becoming ourselves. at times it was disturbing depressing and scary to consider the intricate webs of misinformation and neglect that have created some of the more negative aspects of urban living for young women. But despite the overwhelming intimidations there were many moments when I was forced to deeply consider the strength that we were deeply imbued with and our bravery at facing challenges/obstacles, our past and some of what makes our roots. Piece it apart and making that connection and still being hopeful that we can improve it for ourselves and our daughters. (*Fed Up Honey*)

When the women's movement declared "the personal is political" in the 1960s and 70s women were invited to re-interpret private experiences of exploitation and violence in a shared, social and political context. Women articulated a new gendered politics, redefining their own subjectivities, within the narrative frameworks of patriarchy and sexism (Apfelbaum, 2001). Along the same lines, participatory action research (PAR) practice starts with personal concerns as a basis for social theorizing. Through a process of investigating their own everyday lives and collective reflection, research participants come to understand their individual experiences as shared, as social, and then in turn as political (Fine et al., 2003; hooks, 1995).

In this chapter I consider the development of new subjectivities as part of a participatory research process from a post-structural perspective, engaging the radical legacies of feminist inquiry, critical race theory, developmental theory, and long-standing traditions of community research (Kesby, in press; Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Torre, 2005; Reason

& Bradbury, 2001). At the same time, following Kesby (forthcoming) I want to show how a participatory praxis can inform post-structural theory and practice. Specifically, I will address issues of power, scale, and the politics of location, arguing that our understanding of participation must take into account the broader social, spatial and political contexts. To this end, I consider Brazilian educator/theorist Paulo Freire's (1974, 1975, 1997) conceptualization of conscientização and his contribution to PAR as he explicitly engages issues of power relevant to feminist and critical race theory and practice.

Participatory research and personal change

If participatory research approaches are a response to research practices that had become so irrelevant, ivory tower, insular, and uninspired, it is not without critique (cf. Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Just as the rhetoric of participation has been appropriated in the neoliberal political context (Harris, 2004), for ex. asking citizens to 'take responsibility and participate in their healthcare while cutting back on Medicare, the term participation gets overused to describe a variety of research practices which could be understood as more or less participatory. An ironic example, the IMF and World Bank, two notorious bastions of multinational capitalism and global restructuring, use participatory research practices in "developing" countries (Francis, 2001), raising the obvious question of how uneven power relations are addressed in this work. This points to a problematic tendency in participatory work whose analysis and practice foregrounds local experience while losing sight of the ways in which broader structural processes interact at the local scale. This is an important critique which I argue can be addressed in a PAR process

that takes into account the development of new subjectivities. To this end, I engage a Frierian model which explicitly addresses issues of power and social structure.

Despite important critiques, participatory research and PAR in particular, represent viable, vital alternatives to the exclusionary domains of academic research. The PAR approach is especially appealing to social researchers working in an activist tradition (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004; Ruddick, 2004; Fine & Torre, 2004; Pain & Francis, 2003; Hart, 1997). While most of the benefits of PAR are identified in terms of its potential as vehicle for social change and action, PAR's role in personal change is less understood (Torre, 2005).

In post-structuralist terms, personal transformation can be understood as the cultivation of new forms of subjectivity or other possibilities of being in the world (Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Gibson–Graham, 2002). My understanding is informed by feminist post-structuralist conceptualizations of subjectivity as unstable, multiple, contradictory, and in process; continuously being shaped in discourse and other material social practices as we interpret and act upon the world (Weedon, 1987). Focusing on subjectivity offers a lens through which to understand the relationship between scales; how, for example, global and local processes are mutually constituted in everyday life and embodied (Gibson-Graham, 2002; Nelson, 1999).

Conceptualizations of subjectivity appear to be at odds with participatory approaches that foreground the 'authentic' or essentialist identities of 'local' people, or whose goal is to emancipate the 'oppressed' people (Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Kesby, in press). Instead post-structuralist perspectives suggest that subjects are constituted through

cultural discourse and practices. Some theorists even go so far as to understand the subject as 'empty' or abstract and coming into being through the repetition of discourses that we associate with identity, such as gender, that look and feel even natural (Butler, 1999; Nelson, 1999; Bourdieu, 1977). My understanding of subjectivity, however, is not so extreme that it dissolves completely the subject, as I suggested earlier in Chapter 5. I embrace agency, drawing upon Stuart Hall's conceptualization (1997a) of "diasporic identifications" as a decision to occupy a particular position at a given moment. As Nelson (1999, 348, *italics original*) explains "how individual and collective subjects negotiate multiple and contradictory discourses, is an inherently unstable and partial process. Moreover, although this negotiation, acceptance, or struggle may be conscious, it is never *transparent* because it is always inflected by the unconscious, by repressed desire and difference." Agency is, as Nelson argues, always mediated and partial. My analysis privileges this emphasis upon agency, the taking control of and taking up of positions, as opposed to the mechanistic unconscious performance of existing socially structured positions (*ibid*).

With this in mind, I consider the ways in which young women negotiate and collage together various subject positions, and in the process forge new ones. I explore the development of young women's new subjectivities as they reflect upon their multiple subject positions in their everyday lives as part of participatory research process. Like Kesby (forthcoming), I think that "post-structuralism and participation can be understood as reciprocal and interactive and not antagonistic." Instead of focusing upon participation as "as a means to 'reveal' subjugated knowledges and access silenced voices" here I consider how "its technologies and social relations do actually create new forms of knowledge and ways of knowing" (Kesby, *in press*). In other words, I engage the potential of a participatory process for producing new subjectivities (Kesby, *in press*;

Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Torre, 2005). This approach, in keeping with post-structuralist thought, in the words of Freire “affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming* –as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (Freire, 1997, 65, italics original).

My analysis considers how young women are transforming themselves as they engage in a PAR process. What are young women learning about themselves? And how does a PAR process support and expand young women’s possible identifications? This is especially critical for young women who at this time in their lives are investigating and trying on possible selves. While fashioning and refashioning their selves, and testing themselves and all who surround them, young people take risks and explore different identities as they seek to establish their social roles.

For young people in particular, the benefits of participatory work have been articulated within the framework of development (Sutton, 2004; Sabo, 2003a; Hart, 1997, Hart et al, 1997). Especially germane to post-structural understandings of subjectivity, development can be understood as a process of ‘becoming,’ in terms of young people learning and performing “a head taller than they are” (Vygotsky, 1978, 102) in their relation with others. Vygotsky’s social and process-oriented conceptualization of development is relevant to the collaborative approach of participatory work (Sabo, 2003b). Development is conceived as an integrative ongoing process in which interpersonal (social) processes are transformed into intrapersonal (internal) processes; the sphere of external activities is turned inward (Vygotsky, 1978; Marx, 1859). In this sense, through doing and being engaged in the world, our identities are socially constructed in action and in relation with others. Identity is therefore understood as dialectical, constructed in transaction with our

social, political and environmental contexts (Sabo, 2003b; Heath, 2000; Proshansky et al, 1983).

In contrast with the rhetoric of youth development which is too often mobilized in the name of deficit, especially with regard to young people of color, the framework most compatible with PAR identifies young people as 'agents of change' (Ginwright & James, 2002). In this regard, the potential of young people to develop new subjectivities which challenge hegemonic social constructions is forefronted. As opposed to the individualized focus of traditional developmental approaches, this perspective considers young people's development in relation to a larger social, political and economic context, explicitly adopting a social-ecological approach (Sabo, 2003b; Ginwright & James, 2002; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). Significantly, this developmental perspective is also in keeping with a post-structural conceptualization of subjectivity that emphasizes the relationship between one's sense of self and the world.

A post-structural perspective on conscientização

Using Freire's conceptualization of conscientização as a framework for analysis I discuss the PAR process as a site for the development of new subjectivities. As part of this practice, young women reflect critically upon their everyday lives as part of a collective process which emphasizes dialogue, and in so doing, re-work and re-define their subjectivities as young working class women of color. Key to my discussion is a reconsideration of conscientização within a post-structural framework.

Our PAR process was modeled on Freire's writings (1997) on "education as a practice of freedom," an approach he developed for a radical educational practice geared towards

social change. The first phase of the research process engaged the young women in an investigation of their everyday lives and started with their personal concerns. Using what Freire identifies as a “problem posing approach,” the researchers were involved in a process of critical questioning of issues that were important to them, and of each others’ perspectives. As Freire states (1997, 64, *italics original*): “In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation.”

Structured as a collective enterprise, our PAR process moved beyond Freire’s conceptualization of the oppressor-oppressed dyad, to engage multiple subject positions both interpersonally and intrapersonally. This involved not only interrogating the different perspectives around the table, but also taking into account the multiple roles young women play in their everyday lives as they shift from student, to caretaker, to girlfriend, to worker, to best friend, to lover, to consumer, etc. In our analyses we addressed issues of power, implicitly adopting a Foucauldian understanding of power as ubiquitous and circulating (Foucault, 1980 & 1975). Along these lines, we considered where young women felt in control in their everyday lives, with the understanding that they are all potentially powerful in different spaces/scales. What roles are more powerful? What spaces offer more possibilities for different performances of being a young working class woman of color? What are the conflicts between roles? The first part of this participatory process involved the excavation of the researchers’ situated positions tracing lines between identifications and social/spatial contexts that produce these subject positions. As Freire writes (1997, 90): “People as beings ‘in a situation,’ find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark. .. Reflection

upon situationality is reflection about the very conditions of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be 'in a situation.' ”

To critically reflect upon subjectivities reveals not only the complex ways in which young women identify themselves, but also how they are seen by the larger society. As Ginwright and James point out “Often, inequality is linked to identity...power and privilege are often granted based on identity (with the most going to white, heterosexual,middle-class men)” (2002, 36). To focus upon identifications is to surface the relationship between broader social and political issues and the young women’s situated positions. This was made very obvious when, as part of their research the researchers read the report (discussed previously) produced by a local social service organization about young women in their community. The report forced the researchers to confront what Freire calls the “the roots of their oppression,” what he identifies as the process of *conscientização* through which one perceives social, political, and economic contradictions, and takes action against oppression. Reading the report was a turning point for the collective, a moment of *conscientização*, of coming face to face with distorted representations and deciding in that moment to act upon it, to dedicate their project to “speaking back” to distorted stereotypes.

Along post-structural lines, *conscientização* could be understood as a negotiation and deconstruction of the cultural narratives that misrepresent young women of color, drawing connections between social identities and their social and political contexts. Identifying how and why others mobilize a discourse of stereotyping, the young women researchers considered at the same time how they themselves may also at times subscribe to these powerful cultural narratives. As Freire states “as long as the

oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically “accept” their exploitation” (Freire, 1997, 46).

Freire identifies the outcome of conscientização as becoming “more fully human,” what many call empowerment (Kesby, in press). I am, however, not comfortable with the term. In addition to the loaded paternalistic connotations (Cruikshank, 1994), the term empowerment suggests a lack of power on the part of participants, who are understood as less powerful (than the academic researcher, among others). It is difficult for me to disentangle the term empowerment from its history wherein the term has been especially overused with regard to communities of color, and young people of color in particular, who are often simultaneously identified as powerless and threatening. What’s more, empowerment suggests a passivity on the part of the participant-- it is something that happens to him/her. Even more problematic is when the discourse of empowerment is mobilized in connection with specifically determined goals or ideals, bringing to mind reform or assimilationist models that hold up ideals which reproduce social hierarchies (Harris, 2004; Gagen, 2003; Kelley, 1997). From this perspective empowerment is understood as a behavior change. Empowerment = performing program goals defined by outsiders, such as in those development programs in “developing” countries or programs for urban youth constructed as “at risk.” But, who is empowering whom, and to what end? What does it mean to feel empowered? And is this the same as feeling powerful? (Cruikshank, 1994)

The definition of empowerment seems to me a contradiction to the original premises and promises of PAR, a process which is theoretically and empirically grounded in the power/knowledge of the participants. If we subscribe to a Foucauldian understanding of power, participants, regardless of their ‘social status’ must be understood as already

powerful human beings. Even if young women feel less powerful in some spaces of their lives, for example at school, they may in fact have access to spaces where they feel very powerful and active such as, for example, with their families, in their neighborhood, or as a consumer.

Even though from a post-structural perspective Freire worked within a reductive framework in his identification of only two diametrically opposed positions of oppressor and oppressed, his description of the process suggests a more fluid conceptualization of power. He emphasizes what he calls a 'co-intentional praxis,' a process *with*, not *for*. In this process Freire insists that participants must engage in the struggle, the process of conscientização, as "Subjects, not objects" (1997, 49). 'Subjecthood' from a post-structural perspective could be understood as a conscious negotiation of particular cultural narratives, defying deficit social scripts or dominant social constructions. In this light, conscientização could then be understood as leading to the development of new subjectivities which may be potentially transformative and challenge hegemonic ways of being. Rather than understanding conscientização as a singular turning point, a revelatory 'big bang' where everything becomes clear, our experiences suggest that it is an iterative long-term shifting process of learning, making sense of one's subjectivity, and re-working it through collective dialogue, ongoing reflection, and analysis (Kesby, in press; hooks, 1994).

While conscientização is articulated by Freire as a personal 'coming to terms with' one's own situatedness, in a collective PAR process this 'coming to terms with' operates on both individual and group levels which are interrelated and mutually constitutive. For example, when one of the researchers, Erica Arenas, described her multiple identifications, and the push and pull she feels among them in her personal description,

she contributed to the overall analysis of the group which identified complexity as a key characteristic of young women of color. Following is an excerpt:

I am extremely emotional but want to hide my feelings. I have a hard time trusting some and put too much trust into others. This leads to hurt feelings and total vulnerability. I want to be vulnerable but it makes me feel weak. I want to feel weak but no one wants to care for me. I want to care for those I love and want them to care for me more. I never believe anyone can love me as much as I do them. I want to take care of people but don't want them to need me. (Rios-Moore et al., 2004,1)

Key to PAR is a collective process of critical reflection. Dialogue is the cornerstone of conscientização; according to Freire, "it is in speaking .. that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is an existential necessity"(Freire, 1997, 69). Not only is the telling of one's story crucial, but also the being heard. Through a dialogic process collectively working through and making sense of personal and shared experiences there is a possibility of creating new subjectivities.

Conscientização : "I think our headline should be "fucked over shitty", cause all we talk about is being fucked over"

Anger was a starting point for the research project. In the following excerpt the researchers discuss the title for their website.

CC: Alright www.-what?

Ruby: www.whore I'm fucking mad. com.

Annissa: That's worse than "Makes me mad" but you know it gets the point across. It really does. I think we should let ourselves be angry. That's how I feel.

Ruby: We are and we're trying to hide it.

Annissa: You know you have gotten more progressively angry over this month?

A consideration of the emotional engagement in doing research, of what it *feels* like to do research and to be intimately involved, represents a feminist, post-positivist flipside to the distanced mantle of the scientific method (Cahill, 2004; Smith, 1999; Bhavani, K.K., 1994). Freire speaks to the labor of conscientização, the pain of coming to terms with the 'roots of your oppression' as you come into your subjecthood. It hurts, as Freire remarks, "liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one" (Freire, 1970, 31). It is this pain, this rage, that is so essential, hooks reminds us (1995), to confront and move beyond the pain towards self-recovery and clarity. In her discussion of black rage, she suggests that in order for black folks to claim subjectivity "we need to claim our rage" (hooks, 1995 16). But in order for rage not to consume us, hooks (1995) argues that it must be engaged and used constructively; and it is this engagement that leads towards personal and social transformation. Or, as Freire would put it, it is through the praxis of the struggle -- through reflection and action upon the world that we are able to transform it. In so doing we transform ourselves, as one of the researchers articulates eloquently:

By the end of our time together during the summer we came to the agreement that we wanted to provoke others into rethinking the standard negative stereotypes of young urban women of color that they encountered. But before we could even realize that that was what we wanted to do we had to (through angry eruptions, upset, and discussions) realize that we were living under the veil of those stereotypes ourselves. We had to touch upon some of those emotions that those oppressively heavy misconceptions had laid on us, and that was a difficult and sometimes painful process" (Cahill et al, 2004, 238)

To face stereotypes as a collective is to come to terms with how these stereotypes have affected you individually and collectively, and the impact they have on your everyday lives. This is hard work. It involves taking off the blinders we wear to protect ourselves. It is painful. The pain was often expressed as anger. The following discussion between the researchers gives a snapshot of the anger, interrupted by humor to take the edge off

it (the words do not convey the emotions expressed through tone and body language -- imagine).

Annissa: We're like some primitive crazy people—like we're just so fucking crazy. Not knowing how to wipe our tushes! --Asses!!!

Janderie: There's a lot of ass-wiping going on.

Jasmine: You'd be surprised how many people don't know how to do that, okay?

Annissa: So-- that's so disturbing. -- That's the perfect way to put it. We're like little Africa. Maybe we should go to Africa. We're like insane. We're overemotional. Oversexed.

Ruby: Animals!!!

Carmen: We're like animals to them.

Annissa: We're like not even human. We're like half rabbit -

Jasmine: Half 'Bay Watch.' Half -

Laughter

Carmen: A rabbit. And no money. Like a hobo or something stupid.

The discussions of stereotyping were upsetting, emotional and painful, loaded with personal and historic legacies of racism, prejudice and denial. Implicit connections were made several times to slavery, what one researcher identified as “the unspeakable,” summoning up the related horrors, violence, and dehumanization. In this context the researchers exchanged experiences of feeling like second class citizens, feeling invisible in some places and hypervisible in others, and the ongoing struggle to preserve one's self-esteem and humanity in the face of this. After reading the social service agency's report that inspired the Makes Me Mad project one researcher expressed this sentiment:

This last page, I'd rather not read it, but I'll tell you what I meant by it: the estimated costs for services are derived from the analysis and possibilities that a certain percentage of girls raised on the Lower East Side will manifest a

particular problem or set of problems. Meaning that we are just statistics and projections! We're not human beings! .. And I just put 'what the F does that mean?' Because I was really- and I wanted everybody to see. Look at that! (shows her notebook on top of which she has scrawled FUCK! In big capital letters)

The PAR process provided what social psychologist Erika Apfelbaum (2001) describes as a social and shared context for the witnessing and reliving of each other's private experiences of violence and discrimination. "Narration is tragically bound to the interlocutor's capacity for hearing what is said" (Apfelbaum, 2001, 29), critical to the sharing of traumatic experiences is being heard. In this instance "listening is not a biological capacity, but rather an emotional relationship between people and requires trust. In this context consensus is not significant, what is important is a willingness to become "part of the transmission" (Ibid). Through sharing with others the pain of humiliation, isolation, and alienation that comes with racism, one is able to come to terms with one's pain, or at least release it, even though there is no pretense at resolution.

Annis: I think that any kind of, the things I don't want to talk about, I force myself to talk about.

Jasmine: Because?

Annis: Because there's a reason. There's a reason why I don't want to talk about it. I'm probably running from it. I'm probably afraid of it. And it's not bad to say I'm afraid. Like when I say I'm afraid, I'm no longer afraid, because I've dissipated some of it. I don't give it power. So much.

As Jasmine explains "It's always good to talk about anything. Whether it gets solved or not—it's always good to just get it off your chest." Or put differently by another: "I think we purged it. Like I think that was like purging, like whhhhhhahha (throw up noise)! Okay, now I can move on." Discussing together the persuasive and dangerous characterizations they face in their everyday lives but don't often have the space to

speak seriously about was cathartic or even 'therapeutic' as Janderie put it. Ruby identified the process as 'self-counseling.' The collective critical reflection process of PAR provided a space for expressing and releasing emotions and working through the pain and confusion of personal and shared experiences.

Jasmine: This is good because like- this is not something that happened over a year. This is like years of stuff that's just like festering inside of people and there's no place where you can just go and have people of different, coming from different areas, and talk about stuff. And –

Janderie: And not let it get hostile.

Jasmine: Yeah exactly. So this is perfect. This is something that people need. Especially if they come—if they're very frustrated. Because that frustration just leads to violence.

While similar to therapeutic processes which focus on the individual's relationship to the family, the PAR research project is a sort of therapeutic and critical educational process which "jumps scales" (Smith, 1993) by drawing connections between embodied personal experiences and larger social processes. The focus in the PAR process is upon social analysis even though it starts with personal experience. This is not to say that it is not a psychological process, but that the focus of inquiry is expanded to consider one's identity in relation to social, spatial and political processes. Putting into words complicated feelings about experiences of racism is not only a release, but a way of making sense of experiences and emotions that are often confusing and personalized, as Ruby explains:

I mean I was talking to my father about this and how mad I was when I got home Thursday (after reading the report) And was he was saying--I mean you just can't get too personal with it. But you have to take this personally because if you don't take it personally it's just going to fly over your head and its going to keep on happening and I cannot accept it.

Racism and poverty for example are experienced as extremely personal and as part of one's everyday experiences of, for example, being displaced to an infested building, or being followed when shopping by a store employee. As Erika Apfelbaum states (2001) "telling is knowing one's story," and by extension, oneself. Apfelbaum's writing explores the possibility of communicating with others across 'traumatic boundaries,' which is relevant to the project focus on stereotyping, and the material and psychological impacts of structural racism and poverty. In the PAR project the telling and the knowing is a collective enterprise of developing a social analysis connecting discrimination, privilege, and race based on interpretations of personal experiences. "The collectivity's historical accounts provide a legitimizing foundation for individuals to make sense of personal experience" (Apfelbaum, 2001, 21). For example, as discussed at the start of the chapter, Apfelbaum (2001) gives the example of how women's collective social movements in the 1970s denounced violence against women and made it a political and public issue which in turn made it possible for rape victims to come forward and share their stories within this narrative framework. Likewise, by focusing upon stereotyping in their project the researchers created a shared and collective space for validating stories of structural racism and poverty (made concrete in their virtual space of their website www.fed-up-honeys.org). Such stories can be difficult to articulate without access to a narrative framework that can hold one's experience. In this space "the problem" is redefined and made social and political.

The "Makes Me Mad" project represents a challenge to the dominant narrative perpetuated in educational institutions, the media, and the public sphere, which obscure the relationship between race and privilege, erase whiteness, and instead blame poor people for their own poverty. The prevailing paradigm proposes a double-edged story to explain success and failure. On the one hand there is the story of the American Dream

which offers a color-blind discourse of meritocracy and equal opportunity, suggesting if one works hard enough s/he will succeed regardless of race. In this story race doesn't matter anymore in our society, we are 'beyond race' or 'post-race' (Singh, 2000: Kobayashi & Peake, 2000), examples of success include prominent public figures Colin Powell or Oprah Winfrey. Held up as attainable for everyone through personal effort, application and good choices, this fiction of success masks the unevenness of privilege. The myth of the American dream, of equality of opportunity, denies the endurance of structural racism, sexism, and class inequality and in so doing erases the struggles of most young women who navigate social structural constraints which include a shrinking labor market, the lack of affordable housing, and poor quality of public education. As Anita Harris (2004) explains, just as the global capitalist economy relies upon an underclass, the fiction of success, the ideal citizen, depends upon the same. The cultivation of the success story depends upon the production of failure as "poor choices, insufficient effort, irresponsible families, bad neighborhoods, and lazy communities;" as the deviant experiences of a minority of youth, who not surprisingly are mostly minorities (Harris, 2004, 6; see also Kelley, 1997). Like soap operas, the story is always changing, keeping up with the times, but the plot remains the same. The central figure is a young woman of color who is pregnant, unwed, and who has to drop out of school, and presumably go on welfare.

The "Makes Me Mad" project represents a "counter story" (Harris et al, 2001), a contradiction of the dominant discourse, and interrupts the production of what is understood as "natural" (Bell, 2001; Kobayashi & Peake, 1994). The counter story disrupts the "master narratives" which are "often hard to see until you look under the covers—they are normally labeled as common sense and therefore become invisible in everyday life and academic productions" (Harris et al, 2001, 8). According to Harris,

Carney & Fine (2001), the counter narrative represents subjugated knowledge, both because it doesn't resonate with the dominant paradigm and because it airs issues that are erased in the (white/mainstream) public consciousness. If the refusal to hear is an indication of fear, when someone's "existential and epistemological safety is jeopardized" (Apfelbaum, 2001, 29), on a social level this fear can be explained in several ways. The fear and refusal to engage the subject of race and racism in a meaningful way reflects a discomfort with the enduring history of racism in the US, which brings up pain, anger, and guilt among other feelings. The discomfort with addressing issues of racial and class inequities is also indicative of the disjuncture with one of the principle American cultural narratives that if you work hard you will succeed, which many Americans are invested in. The stutters and silences around structural injustice in terms of race and class may also function as a mechanism for maintaining white privilege, which engages all of the above explanations (Aspen Institute, 2004b).

The critical attention to the issue of cultural representations serves to "break the silence" as Henry Louis Gates wrote recently (Gates, 2004), about when Barak Obama raised the stereotype of "acting white" to describe the student of color who is dedicated to their studies at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. If the silence was broken it was not in communities of color (as a letter to the editor in the New York Times pointed out the next day) who have certainly been grappling with these issues and talking about them for a long time (as related in Chapter 4). "Breaking the silence" instead would refer more accurately to the (white) public sphere, which I identify as such not because all white people refuse to acknowledge the relationship between whiteness and privilege, but to highlight the structural dimension to a cultural discourse which remains silent on these issues (Fine et al, 2004). Certainly the subject of race and class inequities figure largely in ongoing contemporary and historic conversations within communities of color, in

popular culture (music in particular), and behind closed doors. The private spaces of the home in particular have been written about by writers of color as spaces of nurturing and healing from the scars inflicted by racism in public spaces, spaces for the recuperation of self-esteem (Ward, 1996, hooks, 1990).

The difficult position of young working class women of color is reflected in contradictions between competing cultural narratives which highlight and erase intersections of their racial, gendered, classed, and sexual identities. In geographic terms this can be understood as a shifting production of young women's identity in different settings (i.e. home and school) and at different scales, which can be disorienting. The "Makes Me Mad" project is a conscious self-positioning on the part of the young women involved who are explicitly embracing a social and shared situated perspective as a young urban women of color.

If the Makes Me Mad project points to the potential of social research as a space for the development of new subjectivities, critical questions are raised regarding the role and responsibilities of the academic researcher in facilitating this process. Keith Lawrence argues that this issue is extremely important in developing cross-racial coalitions in community-based research projects (K. Lawrence, personal communication, April 1, 2005). How, for example, does a white researcher, such as myself, make possible and encourage an analysis that foregrounds race? And, from another perspective, another critical line of questioning would consider the personal transformation of the researcher—what 'new' subjectivities did I develop? How did the Makes Me Mad project challenge me to interrogate my own experiences?

Re-construction

I just see with different eyes. Open eyes. Like you, like I think what happened like, when I was 15 years old, like people always used to say "Ruby open your eyes, open your eyes!" But you never open your eyes. But then like literally your eyes are open; but your eyes are not open. And I just think that just recently I've been opening my eyes. I saw a whole lot of different things and though it's negative I always try to get the positive thing out of it cause I don't want to walk around here with a type face. I don't want to do that. I don't want to do that for the rest of my life because it's going to stay on my face and its just going to make me really ugly when I get older. Because it's going to be everywhere. And I just --I just try to see the positive light out of everything. .. And I have to worry about my family I don't have, I mean though I don't have any kids. I have to worry about them. Though they are unborn or whatever. I have to worry about them. Because I am a child bearer, I can bear child-children. Excuse me-- not that I want to!
(Ruby)

Through the PAR process the researchers developed a social analysis weaving together tales of discrimination, of disinvestment and white privilege, and in so doing they re-defined not only 'the problem,' but also their selves. If to tell one's story is to know one's story, it is also to take control over one's representation. The "Makes Me Mad" project is a conscious and collective re-construction of the young women's identities and the development of new subjectivities. For some the new subject positions may have involved a greater shift from previous identifications, the shifting of perspective depends of course on where you started. My analysis does not measure the degree of difference or show the 'before' and 'after' self; I did not conduct a pre or post occupancy evaluation of identifications. I began with the premise that all involved are multiply-situated, complex, and contradictory individuals who are always changing, growing, developing and engaging with the social world around them. Rather than attempt to delineate the arc between new and old (an arc which is different for each of the researchers), my analysis focuses upon the shared situated subject positions of the researchers as articulated through their writings, the presentations of their research findings, and the collective discussions among them. In fact it is confusing to speak of "new"

subjectivities, which seems to suggest that they take the place of “old” subjectivities. Instead, most of us move between various perspectives, collaging together different social discourses as we interpret experience.

My analysis does not therefore attempt to identify the new subjectivities in simple terms, ‘now I am this _____ (fill in the blank)’, which gives an impression of a fixed or singular position. Instead subject positions represent a situated analysis through which the researchers understand their world, namely as young, urban, women, of color. This does not, however, imply a consensus of perspective, which belies the complexity of a shared standpoint, a standpoint which is, in fact, defined by its embrace of plurality and in reaction to stereotypical mischaracterizations which “oversimplify, reduce, and limit us.” The researchers wrote their report (Rios-Moore, 2004): “To convey the difficulty and challenge of being a contradiction.. of being many things at once.” “It’s clear that these stereotypes are very limited in their scope and unable to fully encompass the complexities of individual lives....These misinformed portrayals leave out all of the subtle and unique differences between individual young womyn. Without considering the challenges that we face in our everyday lives, these portrayals further the already stagnated process of improving the living conditions that many young urban womyn of color face.” Witness the production of a new subjectivity constructed upon a platform rejecting a simplistic representation. Developed upon a premise of multiplicity and a contextualized understanding of identity, the researchers collectively produce subjectivities which are politicized even if not political, and motivated by anger. Perhaps most importantly, this is a collective identification that is collaboratively produced. Taken together these characteristics combine in a new way of interpreting and being in the world.

Central to the collective construction of the situated subject position of what it means to be a young urban woman of color is the bifurcated perspective of being the “other” (Pratt, 1999). Gloria Anzaldúa complicates this perspective her conceptualization of “mestiza consciousness” (1999). She describes it as a hybrid, “racial, ideological, cultural and biological crosspollination, an “alien” consciousness...a consciousness of the Borderlands” (1999,99), to account for the ways in which we are multiply situated (as discussed in chapter 4). The push and pull is confusing as Ruby expresses, “I just don’t understand how I could feel all of that stuff there and then feel the exact opposite. It’s like crossing over to invading the others. Like private. I feel all of this at the same time. We’re always switching, right? Or at the same time we’re feeling happy and sad. We’re complex people, right?” Similarly Annissa articulates her contradictory positionings as “feeling split.”

Acknowledging the power of stereotypes as an “axis around which everything revolves” in their analysis of their own writings, the researchers identified examples of how they relate to and resist stereotypes; how they “define themselves against and/or through stereotypes” (Rios-Moore et al., 2004), as excerpted from their report:

I am a bearer of life, lover, fighter, mad, mad, mad, self-involved, a member of an African American family, a slave’s great great granddaughter, troubled, angry, thoughtful, Black, stereotypical, a statistic.” By combining words that are contradictory and connected she simultaneously sheds and uses the stereotypes to describe the way she views herself and the way she thinks she is viewed from outside. By doing so she acknowledges the connection of perceptions with the way she constructs a self-image. (Rios-Moore et al, 2004)

As opposed to stereotypes which attempt to fix a singular identity, the young women refuse easy categorization highlighting their contradictory, shifting subject positions. In one moment a researcher exclaims: “We need to learn how to wipe our own asses

without white people or anyone doing it for us!” and the next she calls attention to the connections between white privilege and structural racism. The research project provided a space for processing some of the tensions between their multiply-situated identifications. Following the researchers collectively discuss some of the ambiguities involved in their everyday self-expression.

Janderie: I call my mother nigga.

Annissa: You call your mother nigga?!

Janderie: I do. It comes naturally to me.

Ruby: My grandmother, she would get up with her crutches and beat the shit out of me. I would never never never say that word in front of my grandmother.

Carmen: You want the word defined? (*explaining to Alice*)

Janderie: A nigga is an ignorant person.

Jasmine: But it means so much more-

Annissa: No --we need to break that down.

Ruby: The oppressor. The slavemaster used that –

Laughter

Carmen: Tell her what oppressing means.

Annissa: Okay so oppressing means. I'm going to put you in chains and you're going to clean my floor. I'm oppressing you. I'm making you feel small I'm making you feel like your nothing.

Ruby: So I could feel bigger.

Annissa: Yes. I 'm stepping on top of you. to make myself feel taller : N-I-g-g-e-r, nigger. Now, present day, today: Nigga. N-I-g-g-a. It's like when a white person calls a black person nigger they calling them stupid. Idiot. And now we use it as the same meaning except we use--

Ruby: I don't think it's the same meaning. I think we use it as a more friendly term. Though that word could never be friendly though.

Annissa: You could be calling that person —that idiot down the street --oh yeah that nigga over there. Like, it's still meant nastily and kindly. It's the most contradictory use.

Janderie: Anyway. Is a very bad habit.

CC: What's a bad habit.?

Janderie: Saying that word. Just using that stupid slang that we use.

Annissa: It's self-degrading.

Janderie: It's sad too that that's a problem for us. That we have to be aware of how we're speaking around certain people and it sucks it takes a lot of you.

Ruby: But you know what I think its good because you do consider it as a second language. It shows your diversity and how you can change in different environments and how you can cope with that environment.

Annissa: It's a double edged sword. It is odd that a lot of our language to each other is hostile. Its it not like delicate, loving --

Jasmine: I'd rather have that then actually the action because people who don't use the hostile language are very hostile. You know.

Janderie: Exactly.

Annissa: I do agree. I don't want nobody hitting me but at the same time I don't want nobody calling me nigga and I don't want anybody saying that bitch is a fucking ho. I mean it's angry, angry language and I know I'm angry.

Janderie: Me and Carmen are, like— cause we talk like that everyday, I guess.

In their discussion of the shifting contentious meanings of nigger and nigga, the young women offer a nuanced interpretation of language use addressing its social and historical context. Re-appropriating language might enable a symbolic control over a painful and violent history. Antwi Akom (2000, 155) argues the complex demarcation between nigga and nigger speaks to one's relationship to history and identity, marking the struggle that is "also a struggle of memory against forgetting." Here the young women problematize the disconnect between speaking and acting in violent ways, between intimacy and distance, and complicate the discrepancies between using

hostile/angry language and code switching. As Annissa states: "It's good to think about why you switch codes. .. Why do we make a decision that some people deserve that and some people don't." The discussion of how language is used and received becomes an opportunity for the young women to make sense of the various ways they communicate and how this relates to their self-construction. If stereotypes attempt to fix meaning, in their discussions the young women detach it, deconstruct it, take it apart and look at it. To this end the young women address the possibilities of language, and in turn, how they understand their subjectivities as hybrid, complex, and riven with contradictions.

Contextualized subjectivities

Insisting upon a contextualized subjectivity the researchers deconstructed the stereotypes, identifying everything they leave out including "background" and "the challenges young women face that leave them in compromised stereotypical situations" (Rios-Moore et al., 2004):

Ruby: The stereotypes- they leave out the true identity of the person. I think we are so much more complex and it's not too much. And there's a lot more about us than just a stereotype or a statement that tries to understand us in a simple way. And I just think they leave out a lot of everything! Almost everything.

Janderie: .. they leave out the things that make us lead up to these stereotypes. Like our backgrounds and abuse in the family and how some of us don't have support. You know people pushing us. And sometimes, um. young people, or poor people, have to leave school to work to support their families and stuff like that

Annissa: Cause their mommas have too many babies and there's no father around.

Janderie: Yeah exactly I think that's what they leave out. And deadbeat dads. They leave that out.

Carmen: It leaves out why. A girl drops out of school. Why they get pregnant? And then have to drop out of school?

Janderie: ..that we are all lazy and on welfare. But that's leaving out the fact that there a lot of women out there who have to go out and work and support there families who are not lazy and who are not on welfare and are educated. It's like the opposite!

Re-constructing their subjectivity involved not only correcting the mischaracterizations, but also tracing the production of the stereotypes. The young women grapple with the material social realities of the deadbeat dad, the single mother with too many children, the lack of supportive role models, and the stereotypes of these figures in their lives.

Janderie: The lack of resources sometimes leads to the stereotype.

Annissa: Yes. Amen.

Janderie: When young women have nowhere to go and spend their time --

Carmen: That's what I wrote.

Janderie: They end up doing the wrong things like drugs and sex. Which is a stereotype of young urban women of color. And the lack of activities leads them to drop out or not challenge themselves enough.

At the same time that the researchers call attention to the structures underlying the outcomes, they acknowledge these stereotypes are, as anthropologist Leith Mullings explains (1994, 275) : "grounded in enough reality to make them credible. They are not fully articulated, which makes them difficult to confront and contest; at the same time they arouse strong affect on many levels, some not always accessible to conscious reasoning." This is what the researchers and I grappled with in the analysis, the contradictions between stereotypical behaviors all were familiar with and the production of stereotypes as discussed in Chapter 5. For example, many of the young women had friends who were teenage mothers and in fact the statistically the Lower East Side has a high rate of teenage pregnancy compared to the national average (A. Cummings,

personal communication, April 18, 2005). What was confusing for the young women is that the stereotype can sometimes seem like its true. How do you challenge stereotypes which seem like they are based in reality? Another example is illustrated in the "Makes Me Mad" report by a diagram which attempts to map out the relationship between the lack of resources in their community and stereotypes using the example of poor public education, which leads to illiteracy, and a lack of job opportunities, low wages, re-asserting the stereotype of ambitionless (see appendix 4). As the researchers explain in their report (Rios-Moore et al., 2004), what is most problematic is that this stereotype is understood as "inherent" or natural, by both outsiders and by young women.

On a personal level what this means is that young women feel a sense of personal failure, as they try to negotiate failing educational institutions that undereducate them. It is a reproductive cycle, as Rios-Moore et al. write: "the relationship between failing institutions and the individual sets external and also internal standards for young women of color, one informing the other." Reversing the gaze, the researchers shift "the problem" from their own bodies to the larger social and political structure which distributes resources unevenly as witnessed in their own neighborhood. They do not deny the fact that yes, many young women are pregnant in their neighborhood, and many are uneducated (and in fact these two stereotypes are mutually productive), but instead the young women focus their analysis on the circumstances that are productive of this situation. And, most importantly, they shift the blame from the young woman to the social and political structure that reproduces inequalities based on race, class and gender.

This analysis suggests a situated subject position for a young urban woman of color that is politicized even if not explicitly political, addressing the relationship between power,

structural inequities, and identification. As Ruby put it : “We are living in a matrix. Shit is more deep than we are allowed to see. And though I want to be able to reveal I know it would never happen...” Identifying the web of social and political forces which produce their particular situation, and their own situation within this context is complex, and sometimes feels overwhelming, much bigger then any of us can even comprehend, much less change. It is not so easy as pointing a finger at someone “it’s your fault” in a tricky shift of the hand, or a distortion of facts that feel familiar and true, as in the case of a stereotype, a cultural narrative whose power lies in its quick to digest decontextualized message. While the analysis (and related subjectivities) the researchers developed is not complete and is still evolving, it is constructed upon the need to take into account the details of everyday life which inform their understanding of themselves.

From another perspective, a contextualized subjectivity could be understood in terms of the relationship between oneself and the community. This is not a straightforward relationship. For the young women who grew up negotiating the difficulties of growing up in a disinvested, and now gentrifying, neighborhood many contradictions abound. The tensions were articulated by the young women as a push and pull between “moving on up and out,” the escape narrative, and an ‘ethic of care’ reflected in one’s responsibility to the community, as discussed in chapter 4. The space in between these positions was loaded with associations and ambiguity. First there are the contradictions of what Carmen called “ghetto pride,” which might convey a deep attachment to place, or a sense of having “survived” the neighborhood, expressed in the use of language or posturing identified with being *of the hood*. But then how does one reconcile the ghettocentric identity while challenging stereotypes which are identified with the ghetto? Wanting to leave the neighborhood, on the other hand, sometimes labeled as ‘selling

out', might involve a critique of disinvestment, a sense of self respect and healthy entitlement, even as at the same time this might mean disassociating with other more positive aspects of their community, and even an erasure of self. Negotiating this terrain illustrates the texture and complexity of a contextualized subjectivity.

In the end, the researchers focused the Makes Me Mad project specifically on this subject, using their research as a means to excavate their relationship to their community. Their research questions speak to layers of this relationship:

1. What is the relationship between the lack of resources (for ex. education) in a community and stereotypes of young urban womyn of color? What are the impacts of stereotyping on young womyn's well-being?
2. How do stereotypes effect and reinforce your self-image? your understanding of your peers? and your community?

The researchers created a collective space to explore their place-identities. In their report, the researchers simultaneously identify "community building needs from a young womyn's perspective" and challenge stereotypes. Drawing connections between disinvestment and mischaracterizations, the young women collectively affirm their connection to their community. They propose what could be identified as a transactional subjectivity, an acknowledgement of their interdependent relationship with their environmental context (Altman & Rogoff, 1987; Stokols, 1978). In this regard, self-development is understood as inextricably connected to the development of their community. The standpoint articulated in the Makes Me Mad report signals a significant shift from the beginning of the project; collectively they staked out a position which attempts to bridge some of their differences. Together the young women constructed a narrative framework which was able to express both their connection to the community

and their critique of what was missing in it. What they shared, despite their differences, was their frustration.

On being angry

Central to the analysis of misrepresentations was their frustration and anger: Makes Me Mad! Anger was not only a starting point for the project, it was also a line of vision that the researchers brought to their new understanding of the world and themselves. It was about refusing the status quo and pushing for change on both personal and social levels.

Ruby: I think with all the information that we get and all of the anger it makes me go outside of these doors and just look at everything totally different. And with this I am not, no longer naïve about what's going on around me. I'm much more aware. And I'm not, um, I'm not really like, I cant—I'm mad but I'm not going to get mad because you know what? Shit happens. That's the way I see it. Everything happens for a reason whether we know the reason or ever realize what the reason is. Everything happens for a reason. And I mean it just makes me more positive and it makes me want to strive harder for the shit that I do want to get it.

Annisia: I don't feel bad. Even if, I walk around angry all the time like. I think I live in a perpetual state of anger. But I think it works for me in a lot of ways because --

Ruby: That's the way you strive for --

Annisia: Yeah. It's like a fire in your belly. It makes you push to get the things you want. It's the only reason I am able to go to a white classroom and do my work and write my papers.

Anger is motivating, 'a fire in your belly' that makes you 'strive harder' and get to where you want to go. It is a way of seeing that world that fuels your ambition. Anger is not only the way this alternative narrative is expressed, it is central to the counter story. It is a stance with hands on hip (see stickers, back of report, appendix 3) in defiance.

Coming to terms with their anger was very liberating for some, like opening up the flood

gates, it all poured out: "Before I was on this whole positive bullshit. Now I think I'm like fuck it. Fuck the world. Fuck everyone. Now I'm like just face them head on. Fuck it. Shit happens. You got to face it." It is an insistence to deal with, rather than deny or buy into structural inequities. Face it rather than run away, or pretend they don't exist.

Others were careful not to seem too angry; they didn't want to alienate anyone or be perceived as angry women or feminists. Which is why they adopted their group title "Fed-up-honeys," a softer appellation that underscores their frustration (Cahill, 2004).

Janderie: That's the worst. An angry woman. It's the worst thing in the world.

Laughter.

Annisia: I'm so angry. . mad like I want things to change. I don't want things to be this way. I'm just really upset. I don't want things to be the way they are.

Janderie: You're like a guy's nightmare.

Laughter.

Carmen: She is!

Janderie: Angry woman.

Carmen: She'll be like the controlling one in the relationship.

Janderie: She'll be like sitting in a chair –(gestures) 'Get the hell away from me!'

Laughter.

Carmen: He'll be like –'You're right sweetie. Just take it easy.'

Laughter

While certainly there were marked variations in expression and degree of frustration, anger was a collective embodied perspective that was grounded in the shared material, social and political context of the Lower East Side. Anger was a response to the

stereotypes which limited their opportunities and misrepresented them in the public sphere.

Collective subjectivities

A critical turning point in the project, following the researchers' reading of the social agency report, was the collective shared identification of the group as "young urban women of color." Whereas at the beginning what was most remarkable to all involved were their differences, in the face of the stereotypical profiles in the report the group rallied and pronounced their common ground, a shared standpoint based on an identification of intersections of race, gender and place. If class is conspicuously missing it is in keeping with the lack of attention within American politics/culture. Although not mentioned explicitly, class was articulated within the context of structural racism as a disadvantage associated with "color" which translates into a lower socio-economic status and less access to opportunities (as discussed in chapter 4) (Aspen, 2004b).

Adopting a shared standpoint is a re-articulation of experience that understands personal experiences as part of a larger social context (Collins, 2000). Identifying a collective standpoint is not to say that the group erased their differences, but rather that the group is characterized and complicated by diverse perspectives and different responses to common challenges (Torre, 2005). Speaking with regard to a Black feminist standpoint, Collins suggests: "When individual expressions of consciousness are articulated, argued through, contested, and aggregated in ways that reflect the heterogeneity of Black womanhood, a collective group consciousness dedicated to resisting oppression becomes possible" (Collins, 2000, 36). Working through contradictory perspectives, the group constructed a dynamic, shifting understanding of a

shared subjectivity based on complexity, and in reaction to stereotypes which essentialize and flatten differences. Identifying themselves as 'young urban women of color' engaged an identity that is historic and transnational. Re-defining what it meant to be a young working class woman of color was powerful for the researchers, who, in so doing, were taking control of their representation and self-definition.

A collective subjectivity was not only about sharing a social identity, but also the process of working together, of collaborating in producing their understanding of their situated position. It was about doing something together, as one researcher wrote: "Our research resulted in a shared bond between 7 young womyn with 7 very different personalities." The support and the relationships developed through the PAR process were what the researchers articulated as the most important about the project. The researchers supported each other in policing the borders of their collectively produced subjectivities, catching stereotypes which would slip into each other's explanations –"Hold on. Wait a moment. What did you say? ! Lazy? Please tell me how you can be lazy and work so many hours a week? Uh –huh. I'm not hearing that." Nurturing self –respect and affirmation was part of the larger project of producing an oppositional subjectivity which defied stereotypical understanding at the same time that it recognized the power of stereotypes on their everyday lives. The social analysis developed by the collective was applied on a one-on-one basis.

"Do you." While this catchphrase emphasizing the individual may appear contradictory to a collective subjectivity, the affirmation of one's individuality and an emphasis upon staying true to one's own needs was key to the shared analysis. "Do you" or "I'm going to do me" is about taking care of yourself (instead of everybody else in your life) and not losing yourself in the face of a hostile social context. The collective subjectivities are

founded upon an attention to individuality, to each other's desires to accomplish their dreams despite the overwhelming structural barriers and stereotypical profiles which limit access to opportunities. To this end, the research process also became a space for the exchange of resources, advice –such as guidance with regard to dorm living or helping each other with financial aid forms, or working through how to negotiate differences with parents. Support also took the form of sharing interpretations of situations and coping mechanisms on how to deal with racist assaults in the classroom or problems in communicating needs. The exchange of information was therefore part of producing and maintaining the collective subjectivity.

Praxis

According to Freire, the development of subjectivities is not “an armchair revolution.” The “discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must also involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be praxis” (Freire, 1997, 47). In other words, identifying a new subjectivity is not enough. New subjectivities need to be sustained, through practice and action. This calls into question whether the telling and the knowing of one's story is enough. Whether it is enough to articulate a new narrative which reframes and redefines experience. If we accept the PAR process as a potential site for personal change, as Kesby eloquently articulates: “Perhaps participatory arenas can provide concrete spaces for resistance and tangible ‘paradoxical spaces’ (i.e. spaces ‘beyond’ dominant powers but in the here and now, not some distant utopian future/zone, see Desbiens, 1999). Perhaps they can provide ‘heterotopic’ locations of reflection from within which to contest, invert, and reveal as illusory the spaces and relations of everyday life. Perhaps they can constitute arenas in which the performance of empowered agency becomes possible” (Kesby, in press, 22).

The question then becomes, how do these narratives “live” and “survive” outside of the PAR process when we leave the supportive spaces of collective research? Is the PAR process just some sort of free space for releasing steam or a therapy session for processing social inequities (Weis & Fine, 2000)? There is a worry that participatory research, even in its more ideal forms, is just some sort of set aside space for developing critical thinking and consciousness, for engaging in critical reflection upon the social structures that constrain us, even while other spaces of our lives are increasingly regulated. These are important questions asked by interdisciplinary researchers and educators concerned with social change.

Kesby (2004, forthcoming) proposes two seemingly contradictory responses to this line of inquiry. First, he argues that participatory processes must not be understood as isolated in time and space, but rather as ‘openings’ within existing social relations and spaces, instead of “unproblematic ‘heterotopias’ of reflection” (Foucault, 1986). It is therefore necessary to understand participation and the production of new subjectivities within the research project’s relation to the broader social, cultural, and political context. On the other hand, if we understand new subjectivities to be embedded and constitutive of the material and social space of the PAR process, an extension of this line of thinking would suggest that it may not be possible to sustain these subjectivities in other spaces of the everyday lives of the researchers. In this regard, Kesby raises concern with regard to the ‘fragility’ of “new knowledge repertoires ..outside of carefully managed arenas.” The difficulty seems to be a matter of shifting, that is the shifting of subjectivities between spaces and scales. But different from *empowerment* (Kesby’s focus), *subjectivities* represent new understandings and ways of being in the world which are both situated within specific geographical settings and at the same time represent a perspective on one’s relation to others and the world. The development of new

subjectivities constitutes a re-framing that “jumps scales” (Smith, 1993), grounded in the local and engaging structural processes.

From a post-structural perspective, Freire’s conceptualization of “praxis” can be understood as a repeat performance of new subjectivities. Kesby argues that a major challenge for the future is to identify the factors that enable the re-performance beyond participatory spaces. But perhaps the boundaries between inside and outside the PAR project are not so clear, as the ‘action’ part of PAR suggests something that reaches beyond and out to new audiences. And even though it is painful, new subjectivities can cross borders without a passport (Anzaldúa, 1999). Performances of new subjectivities can take different forms from something as simple as taking women’s studies classes in college, to introducing a new conversation at the dinner table, to something as dramatic and involved as dropping out of a failing school to go to an alternative student-centered school (as one researcher did). Similarly Alice could not understand her experiences in the Chinese immigrant community the same way after participating in the project and so started her own project with her peers to address stereotypes of young women in the Chinese community (discussed previously). The Makes Me Mad project developed several products : the website, the stickers, and the report, designed to live ‘outside’ of the participatory project, a projection of their new subjectivity into the public sphere, to communicate their critique to a larger public. As the researchers explain in their report:

We are looking to plant a seed in the minds of society. We wanted our stickers to upset you to the point of inspiration. We want our beautiful, young, urban, womyn of color to realize what it is we have against us and we hope it will give you all the motivation to go against the grain, to prove everyone wrong. If you are checking out the website or are reading our newsletter right this very second, then our job is half done. From this point on it is completely up to you to decide whether or not you are willing to accept these stereotypes or reject them. (Rios-Moore et al., 2004)

Or both, as a young woman living in the Bronx suggested as she put the stickers "lazy on welfare", "promiscuous", "likely to become teen mom", "uneducated", "in abusive relationships", all over her body, one by one, saying "I am this" (M. Guishard, personal communication, April 16, 2004), at the same time taking control of these violent representations and owning them and taking their power away.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion: What can we learn from young women?

What ultimately has to change is the way we view each other. Period. And I want to have an influence on that. ... Because ultimately my great grandmamma, and my great grandchild, and my great grandma and I will suffer for my great grandchild. But ultimately I don't want my great grandchild to have to have any differences in her life because she is black. Period. There's no fucking negotiation! I don't care whether she has a mansion or whatever, whatever else. She's still going to be black! And if our society decides its still okay to fuck her because she's black then nothing's changed. What *if* she has all the money in the world? (Annissa)

The critical insight the young women identified in their research is that power lies in controlling how you are defined. In the end, the young women decided to focus their project on contesting stereotypes and changing “the way we view each other” because they know that how they are classified and marked is deeply implicated in operations of power. The stereotypes function as part of a discourse by which young working class women of color are managed and produced—politically, culturally, ideologically, economically, and *geographically*-- in the neoliberal context of the gentrifying/still disinvested Lower East Side. In the Makes Me Mad project the young women engage in the “culture wars,” the collective struggle over representation, in order to unsettle, disrupt, and contest the stereotypical profiles that fix them in a particular location (“at risk,” “the inner city”). In my dissertation research I have traced this struggle on multiple fronts: in the history of the neighborhood, in processes of gentrification and disinvestment, in social constructions of young working class women of color, in young women’s own interpretations of their experiences and their relationship to their neighborhood, in the institutional context of public schools, and in the research process itself.

The young women's "struggle for interpretative power" is not only about the threat of social and spatial exclusion, but also addresses what Mary Louise Pratt identifies as the "control over the terms and conditions under which they will develop their relations with the nation-state, the global economy, the communication revolution, .. and other historical processes" (Pratt, 1999, 39). The struggle for interpretative power is a contestation that takes place at both local and global scales.

Like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Argentina) who protested the disappearances of their children, marching silently every Thursday in front of the state capital (Torre, 1996), or the sex workers of Ciudad Juarez (Mexico) who resisted the attempts of the police to rid them from downtown public spaces in the name of urban progress (Wright, 2004), the Fed Up Honeys protest the invisibility of young women of color in the city (while at the same time challenging the public spectacle of stereotypical profiles). Similar to the Tompkins Square 'riots' of 1988, the much publicized confrontations between squatters, homeless people, housing activists and the police over their rights to public space (Mitchell, 2003; Smith, 1996), the Makes Me Mad project is also a demand for the right to the city, the right to not be excluded from their home communities. But while their project is also engaged in the politics of place and the transformation of their neighborhood, they do not "take to the streets" to overthrow or challenge the dominant social order. Instead the young women engage in the politics of representation. The young women's "struggle for interpretative power" is critical, I shall argue, to challenging processes of urban restructuring.

But how should young women challenge the pervasive discursive regimes which take shape in the different spaces of their everyday lives? Places that include schools, the workplace, their neighborhood, public policies, and their own bodies. The young women

recognize that they are also complicit. They identified the power of representations to also penetrate their own psyches. This makes it difficult to know who, how, or even where, to protest. In a similar vein, it is also a complicated affair to know how to effectively challenge the processes of gentrification which have taken place in a piecemeal fashion over years and are embodied variously in the shape of landlords, whiteness, newcomers to the neighborhood, upscale boutiques representing the new clientele, public policies, or police who secure 'the urban frontier'.

In their rhetorical project, the Fed Up Honeys begin their analysis by focusing attention on their own bodies as a principal site of discursive work. They engage a strategy Stuart Hall identifies as "through the eye of representation," working within the complexities and ambivalences of representations of young working class women of color (Hall, 1997b, 274). Despite the obvious difficulties of engaging the racialized gaze, the *Makes Me Mad* project confronts head on the spectacle of young women in stereotypes of risk and the underclass. This discursive strategy calls attention to the complex interplay between presence and absence, revealing the ways in which stereotypes mask social and structural inequities. The *Makes Me Mad* project shifts the discourse, amplifying silenced voices and the invisible complexities of young women's everyday lives. Behind the flattened caricatures of stereotypes of risk, the Fed Up Honeys "lift the veil of misinformation," echoing W.E.B Du Bois (1989), and make public the contradictory shifting self-identifications of young women.

The struggle for interpretative power is a struggle to foreground the humanity that is erased in the stereotypes of the underclass, and lost in what is identified quite revealingly as the "social costs" associated with gentrification (Atkinson, 2004; Freeman & Braconi, 2004). Challenging assigned scripts of what it means to be young, female, 'of

color', and working class, the Fed Up Honeys assume positions as engaged agents and in so doing they create an opening for reconsidering the role of women in the transformation of cities (Torre, 1996). Taking control of one's self-definition is also about staking out a position in the community. The Makes Me Mad project emphasizes the connections between young women's subjectivity and their neighborhood. To this end, the Fed Up Honeys develop an interpretative framework for affirming the right to self-represent (the right to their bodies, identities, and subjectivities) and their right to the city as mutually constitutive.

While gentrification is most often understood within an economic framework which privileges profit, the young women express another vantage point on the city which is in direct contestation with property rights. Their perspective is identified by Don Mitchell as "the right to the city" after Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1996/1968 cited in Mitchell, 2003). The right to the city implies not only an entitlement to housing, but also a right to assert a public presence within urban space. It "demands the redevelopment of the city in a manner responsive to the needs, desires, and pleasures of its inhabitants, especially its oppressed inhabitants" (Mitchell, 2003, 21). "Rights," Mitchell argues "establish an important *ideal* ... and an institutionalized framework, no matter how incomplete, within which the goals of social struggle can not only be organized but also attained" (Mitchell, 2003, 25, italics original).

As the history of the civil rights' and women's movement demonstrate, rights are not simply bestowed upon people but won in the course of struggle. The advancement of social justice is achieved through contestation and defiance of the social order. Prying open a space to express their perspectives to the public, the Fed Up Honeys entered the fray. In the act of taking up the issue of their public identifications, the young women

produce space. As Mitchell (2003, 35) explains, “representation both demands space and creates space.” The *ideal* vision the young women collectively propose is based on self-directed community change and racial equity. The young women argue to be included in decision-making processes which affect them and to have an opportunity to influence outcomes. Effectively, the young women propose the foundation for what Iris Marion Young would identify as an inclusive democratic practice (Young, 2000, 6). This is in stark contrast to processes of gentrification and disinvestment which feel very much out of young women’s control, as they write in their report :

The ultimate and most beneficial means to an end of the negative effects of such a stark lack of resources is a **community that is self-sufficient and self-concerned**. It is a priority to have young womyn who can feel connected and have a desire to contribute and be involved in their community... (our) research has identified several important ways to build a stronger and more positive community, one that is able to stand in the face of the stereotypes that its children have been pegged with. (Rios-Moore et al., 2004, bold in original)

Central to the young women’s proposal for building a strong community is the project of challenging stereotypes of young people of color, and structural racism, more broadly. According to the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, a racial equity perspective on community change addresses the ways that public policy, institutional practices, and cultural representations work individually and collectively to normalize racial disadvantage and reinforce inequities (Aspen, 2004b) Securing young working class women of color’s right to the city must, therefore, be a project of triangulation. While there is a well-developed body of scholarship in the field of community participation and community development that is relevant to the project of challenging gentrification (cf. Rose, 2001; <http://www.policylink.org/EDTK/default.html> ; www.fifthave.org/assets/pdfs/displacementbooklet.pdf; also see Appendix 5: community based strategies for challenging gentrification), not enough attention has been given to

the role of material social practices of identification, agency, and cultural representations (Wilson et al., 2004; Renaldo, 2002; Muñiz, 1998). This is the gap the *Makes Me Mad* project addresses.

In viscerally personal terms the young women engaged in the “culture wars” in the first place because their public (and private) identities were on the line: “It is this fierce struggle that gives our work significance” (Rios-Moore et al., 2004). Through the process of investigating their own everyday lives and collective reflection as part of a participatory action research project, the young women came to understand their private experiences as shared, as social, and then in turn as political (Fine et al., 2003; hooks, 1995). If the personal is political, it is also, as the Fed Up Honeys reveal in their collective analysis, an opening for examining the way structures of power inform the everyday lives of young women.

The PAR project functioned as place where the young women could reflect, experiment, and grapple with different perspectives and in so doing work through contradictions of their everyday lives. PAR could be understood as a critical ‘laboratory for democracy,’ a safe, ‘in-between,’ ‘paradoxical,’ or even ‘free,’ space (Kesby, in press; Guinier & Torres, 2004; Weis & Fine, 2000) for critical reflection upon social inequities and the dominant hierarchical arrangements of power and privilege. To this end, PAR points to the radical possibilities of social research as a vehicle for both personal and social change.

Through engaging in a participatory research process, the young women collectively developed new forms of subjectivity and new discourses that *subject* in different ways, suggesting a basis for a transformative politics (Gibson-Graham, 2002, 36). Gibson-

Graham propose feminism as a model of this form of transformative politics: "one that started small and personal and largely stayed that way, that worked on cultivating new ways of being, that created new languages, discourses, and representations that built organizations, and that quickly (albeit unevenly) encompassed the globe" (Ibid). They argue that the project of developing new forms of subjectivity, or other possibilities of being in the world, is less about overthrowing a particular symbolic figure or space of domination, but instead a form of politics transmitted through a language and a set of practices (Ibid, 53). But the young women do not only negotiate stereotypes, they also struggle within and against the material conditions of structural racism and poverty. While the Makes Me Mad project foregrounds the critical role of representations, it highlights the relationship *between* discourse, agency, material practices, and space. To this end, my analysis emphasizes the connection between personal and urban development (Katz, 2004).

Inspired by the insight of Dr. Martin Luther King "that freeing black people from the injustices that circumscribe their lives, America will be freeing itself as well" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, 293), Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres argue that the experiences of people of color can be the basis for social transformation. To this end, challenging the issue of racialized stereotypes of young working class women of color includes "a desire to liberate *everyone* who is ensnared within hierarchies of power that ostensibly name them as individuals yet trap them within fixed social locations" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, 289, italics original). If young women are analogous to the miner's canary who would alert the miners of poison in the air, their distress "the first sign of a danger that threatens us all" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, 12), we need to listen to them. As James Baldwin argued over forty years ago: "Whether I like it or not, or whether you like it or not, we are bound together forever, we are part of each other" (Baldwin, 1961, 114).

When our canaries are identified as “at risk” they are warning us that we are all at risk. Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres (2002) argue that the metaphor of the canary suggests both the need for systemic critique and also points toward the possibility of social change.

What then can we learn from young working class women of color? Even though in a cage, the canaries continue to have agency and voice (Ibid, 259). In the Makes Me Mad project the young women raise the thorny question of the relationship between stereotypes and the material social practices and realities of their everyday lives. Why are so many young women dropping out school? Uneducated? And unable to get good jobs? Why are so many young working class women of color getting pregnant? Collectively reflecting upon their own personal experiences the young women identify the convergence of cultural representations, institutional practices and public policies, and develop an analysis of structural racism (Aspen, 2004b). The Makes Me Mad project draws connections between the disinvestment of the Lower East Side and the stereotypes of young women; between, for example, the poor quality of public education, high drop out rates, and stereotypes of young women as ambitionless and uneducated. In short, just as their neighborhood is disinvested, so too are young working class women of color. But what are the implications of disinvesting in young women of color for society as a whole? Are disinvested young women of color a “burden to society” as suggested by one of the stereotypes they showcase in their stereotype stickers? The Makes Me Mad project offers a critique that is relevant to us all, if we listen.

The Makes Me Mad project was conceived as a response to a social service organization report that suggested just that-- that young women who lived on the Lower East Side are potentially a financial burden to society. The report offered a cost-benefit

analysis of how much young women would cost society (in terms of tax payer dollars) if they were to drop out of school, go on welfare, become teen moms, and not function as productive, contributing citizens. Most problematic, Jasmine argued, is that “they are saying basically that we are all these things unless we had their help-- their good will to save us.” Locating the pathology in the young women instead of the social structure suggests, as Guinier and Torres explain, “such an approach would solve the problem of the mines by outfitting the canary with a tiny gas mask to withstand the toxic atmosphere” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, 12). But the idea of investing in young working class women of color as part of society’s responsibility in the form of “sufficient education --never mind wonderful substantive and proactive education,” affordable housing, stability, financial security, would not only serve young women, but all of us.

Guinier and Torres (2002) argue that when our most vulnerable are not being taken care of, it is a sign that the system is failing. When young women are being denied a quality public education what does that say about the education system as a whole? What does it mean when young people drop out of high school in droves? At Posey Park (the zoned Lower East Side high school) approximately one third of the students remained in high school after four years. In Chapter 5 I tried to answer the question of what are young women learning in their educational experiences. But, what can we learn from them? The under-educating of young working class women of color is of vital concern to young women and their communities and has a critical impact upon their psychological and material well-being. The impact is also felt within the community, as Jasmine points out: “If you have a whole bunch of uneducated people in the neighborhood you have nothing.” And, following Jasmine’s insight, what does it mean for a particular segment of our society to be uneducated? Scholars have traced the raced, classed, and gendered ways in which quality public education is denied and disinvested and how this in turn

works to sort young people for differentiated roles in the new economy (Fine et al., 2004b; McDowell, 2004; Lipman, 2003). That the public school system is in shambles is not news. Poor, urban, working class and communities of color have been negotiating a disinvested educational system for years (Fine et al., 2004b). But to return to the metaphor of the canary, the 'shrinking of the public' in a neoliberal context has an impact upon all of us who have a stake in education and believe that society should educate all of us. Guinier and Torres argue (2002, 20) that that "race camouflages unfair resource distribution;" that "patterns which converge around race are often markers of systematic injustice .. and thus disclose how institutions need to be transformed more generally. " In this way they suggest that race can function as a diagnostic tool whose analysis needs to be contextualized more broadly to expose the ways in which structural racialized inequities infects the body politic generally (Ibid, 276).

In addition to the moral argument for equality, Wise raises the question of whether we can "deny that the creation and perpetuation of miseducated persons of color harms us all" (Wise, 2000). From an economic perspective the impact of the disinvestment of public education is felt beyond poor and working class communities of color. Wise asks us to consider, for example, the relationship between the expansion of the racist prison industrial complex and the cut backs in public education, which compete for the same funding. The divestment of public education should be a critical concern for middle class families living in New York who often shoulder the financial burden of sending their children to private schools or who move elsewhere to secure quality public education for their children. Why do New Yorkers no longer expect quality public education for young people and now expect to pay for what was once considered an entitlement? This issue is framed within the broader neoliberal context of privatization.

In terms of processes of gentrification, an economic analysis reveals the negative impacts for working class residents who are first disinvested, and then priced out of the communities in which they have invested their energy, labor, and years of their lives. In the extremely inflated real estate market of New York City however it is not only the working class communities who are affected, but also many middle class families who can't afford to purchase property, who also have problems finding affordable housing, and also pay above average rent burden. The issue of cultural displacement is another issue the young women raised in their discussions. Cultural displacement is experienced as part of the process of gentrification by long time residents whose history is erased from the neighborhood, but it also signals the broader issue of the loss of cultural distinctiveness, 'diversity,' and the homogeneity of the urban landscape. The new face of globalization can be seen now in cities nationwide, distinguished by your local Starbucks or McDonalds. The *Makes Me Mad* project offers a critique that is based on the experiences of young working class women of color but that arguably concerns the wider society.

While gentrification is often represented only in real estate terms, the young women articulate it as part of convergence of deepening inequalities. Gentrification is expressed in their analysis as one aspect of a broader social context which includes the scarcity of jobs, poor quality of education, cut-backs in social services and devolution of state responsibilities, assaults on the gains made through the civil rights movement, a shortage of affordable housing, the growth of the prison industrial complex, the lack of financial security and support, and the fragmentation of communities (Aspen, 2004b; Lipman, 2002). In short, the young women identify gentrification as part of the processes of neoliberal economic urban restructuring as it takes the shape in their everyday lives.

By foregrounding a racial-equity framework, the Makes Me Mad project makes explicit the convergence of race and class in the processes of gentrification and disinvestment in their community. In so doing, the young women challenge the claims of gentrification as “an opportunity to increase socioeconomic, racial and ethnic integration” (Freeman & Braconi, 2004, 39). Like the word ‘diaspora’ which Kathleen Cleaver argues “is such a polite word to describe such a brutal process” (Cleaver, 2004), the discourse of gentrification as urban progress masks the violence of this process as experienced by young working class women of color (and others). My dissertation details the effects of gentrification and disinvestment on young women of color and their community on a psychological, economic, cultural, social, geographical, and political level. The Makes Me Mad project emphasizes the struggles of young women living on the Lower East Side, but as Guinier & Torres argue perhaps it also signals “the need to build a movement for social change informed by the canary’s critique” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, 12).

How could the Fed Up Honeys build coalitions around the issues they raise? Could the Makes Me Mad project engage the critical consciousness of others in the community? A first step might include reaching out to other young people in the community as part of an effort of education and outreach. To date, the Fed Up Honeys have been presenting their work in schools and youth organizations in the Lower East Side. We have found that young men also relate to the project and have used it as the basis for developing an analysis of representations of young men of color. Next, might include building intergenerational support for the project while foregrounding a youth perspective. For example, including young people in community-planning processes and taking their perspectives seriously. Building coalitions both within the neighborhood and with youth

community groups in other neighborhoods threatened by gentrification might engage what Katz identifies as a countertopographical analysis, building “an oppositional politics on the basis of situated knowledges” (Katz, 2001, 1230). For example, a consideration of the impact of urban economic restructuring upon young people across neighborhoods might be the basis for a “grounded but translocal politics” (ibid, 1231).

But how could the Makes Me Mad project reach across racial and ethnic boundaries? This is a challenge in a neighborhood as heterogeneous and fragmented as the Lower East Side. For example, by not addressing issues of race the anti-gentrification movement of the late 1980s and early 90s failed to engage the neighborhood’s large Latino and African American resident base. One strategy for building alliances based on the Makes Me Mad analysis might include opening a public conversation with the question of how *all* young people in the community are being negatively affected by processes of urban restructuring. This might be a way of making the convergence of class or other interests between communities of color and the ethnic working class communities obvious without highlighting cultural or political cleavages (Guinier & Torres, 2002, 277).

While it is certain that the injustices that the young women and their communities suffer are the result of structural processes, what is less clear is how to address these problems. Although challenging structural forces at the community level can often feel like “swimming against the tide” (Aspen, 2004b, 37), the Aspen Institute argues for building the capacity of local organizations to produce change within their control. If we imagine as the Aspen Institute does (ibid), that “these thousands of organizations, staffed by millions of workers, is a potentially powerful network for achieving significant change,” the possibilities for promoting social justice feel more tangible. Similarly,

Marston et al. (in press) argue for political theorizing that starts at the local level with the study of everyday life, which potentially offers more entry points for progressive politics and agency. They point out that because globalization has come to be understood as an inevitable dominant force (like gentrification), it has undermined critical practices and delimited the possibility of agency.

Iris Marion Young argues that we are all politically responsible for our structural situation, even if we are not to blame (Young, 2003). Similarly, Guinier and Torres (2002) ask us to reconsider our role and responsibilities as if we all saw our fates linked to young working class women of color. But what would this mean in the context of the disinvestment and gentrification of the Lower East Side? Young argues that how one is positioned in relations to power and privilege carries different degrees of responsibility. For example, she suggests that organizations and institutions may vary in their ability to influence this process, such as property owners or particular government officials. But, she reminds us that those powerful individuals and institutions often have an interest in reproducing the social inequities that guarantee their privilege. Young argues that “where there are structural injustices, these usually produce not only victims of injustice but also privileged beneficiaries. Persons who benefit from structural inequalities have a special moral responsibility to join in correcting them-not because they are to blame, but because they are able to adapt to changed circumstances without suffering serious deprivation” (Young, 2003). In this regard, addressing the issue of stereotyping and its relationship to power will necessarily involve addressing the relationship of white privilege to the structural disadvantages and disproportionate outcomes associated with color (Aspen, 2004b). Within this framework, Guinier and Torres argue that progressives need to interrogate their relationship to power and privilege and yoke their fate to those with a long history struggling for justice (2002, 290). But what shape this could take in

terms of challenging urban economic restructuring on the Lower East Side remains to be seen.

To conclude, I return to the same question with which I started my research: what can we learn from young women about our communities? What happens when we include excluded perspectives in the development of new knowledge production? A PAR process points to new directions for social researchers who are committed to social justice and change. The Makes Me Mad project offers an opening for imagining an alternative, inclusive, and more democratic vision for the city grounded in racial, gender, and class equity. Contesting the discourses of risk which construct young working class women of color as a "burden to society," the Fed Up Honeys question the valuation of the economic over their personal well-being and challenge the inevitability of gentrification and the rights of property. In so doing, the young women announce their sense of belonging and their right to not be socially and spatially excluded from their neighborhood and the city. To this end, the Makes Me Mad project reframes the public conversation about gentrification as a way of jumpstarting a dialogue that involves us all.

Appendix 1.**Flyer, information handout, application, and reference letter**

the everyday lives of young women in the city

Why The primary focus of this research project is to study and **understand young urban women's experiences and interpretations of their neighborhood**. While there are many books and films about young men's experiences in the city we know next to nothing about how young women experience the city.

Research questions include:
Where do you spend time in your neighborhood?
What places do you like?
Dislike? Why?
How do **you** think your neighborhood could be improved to meet **your needs**? What are **your concerns** and questions about **your neighborhood**?

Where & When

In July, youth researchers will meet 20 hours a week for **4 weeks** at the **Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York** and at sites throughout the **Lower East Side**.

Benefits of participation

Youth researchers will:

- be trained in social science research skills
- receive \$640.00 (\$8 an hour) for their participation (to be paid in two installments)

What

This summer 6-8 youth researchers will be **trained in social research skills** and will conduct research on **their own neighborhood** experiences. Youth researchers will plan and conduct a research project from start to finish.

Who

If you....

- ...are female
- ...are between the ages of 16 and 22
- ...live on the Lower East Side
- ...are available during the month of July

You are invited to apply to participate in this research project.

please note: a limited number of volunteers can be selected.

For questions about the research or to **receive an application** to participate as a youth researcher **please contact:**
Caitlin Cahill

(646) 414-8608 or caitcahill@aol.com

Caitlin Cahill
Environmental Psychology, 6th floor
Graduate School and University Center
City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

DEADLINE Youth researcher applications **must be received by June 19th**. Youth researchers will be notified the following week if they have been selected to participate.

the everyday lives of young women in the city

application

Name _____

Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone number _____

e-mail _____

How long have you lived on the Lower East Side? _____

You will also need to include with your application (see attached forms):

- A short letter of interest.
- A letter of recommendation from a teacher or someone who you have worked with.

Your application must be received by June 19st to be considered for this project.

Caitlin Cahill
Department of Environmental Psychology, 6th floor
Graduate School and University Center
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

If you have any questions in the meantime do not hesitate to contact me at 646 414 8608 between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm or by e-mail at caitcahill@aol.com.

Are you female?

Between the ages of 16 and 22?

Are you available to participate weekdays from July 8th to August 1st?

(see attached info sheet for specifics)

Do you live on the Lower East Side?

If you answered yes, **YOU are invited** to apply to participate in this research project.

the everyday lives of young women in the city

the basics

Youth researchers will be expected to

- Participate 20 hours a week for 4 weeks starting July 8th and ending August 1st (Mon-Thurs).
- be available to participate the entire length of the project.
- come on time ready to collaborate.

Youth researchers

- will receive a stipend of \$640.00 (\$8 an hour for 80 hours)
- will be trained in social research skills including interviewing, mapping, and observational strategies.
- will meet with community organizations and take field trips.
- **will write about, discuss, and explore their own neighborhood experiences.**

project description

My name is Caitlin Cahill and I am a student in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project entitled *The Everyday Lives of Young Women in the City*. The purpose of this study is to understand better young women's experiences in the urban environment, to document where young women living on the Lower East Side spend their time, what they like and don't like about their neighborhood, and to explore their concerns and questions about their neighborhood.

What does a youth researcher do?

A team of 6-8 youth researchers, young women who live on Lower East Side, will be trained in social research methods and will conduct research on the way they use their neighborhood, where they spend time, and if their neighborhood supports their particular needs. Youth Researchers will design and implement a research project investigating their concerns in their neighborhood. The research project will take place at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) and at selected sites in the Lower East Side.

The benefits of participation are that youth researchers will gain research skills and experience and will be helping others better understand young women's views on what it's like to live in the city and how they use their neighborhood.

If you have any questions about this research you can contact Caitlin Cahill at (646) 414-8608 or e-mail her at caitcahill@aol.com.

the everyday lives of young women in the city

reference letter

Your may enclose your letter with the youth researcher's application or send it separately to:

Caitlin Cahill
Department of Environmental Psychology, 6th floor
Graduate School and University Center
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Your name _____

Telephone number _____ e-mail address _____

Applicant's name _____

Please refer to the attached information sheet and do not hesitate to call if you have any questions regarding this project.

Please use this space to write a short reference letter for the applicant. (You may use the front and back if needed or type this on a separate sheet of paper.)

Appendix 2.

Original boundaries of research site

In order to participate potential researchers must live within the following boundaries:

- South of 14th street
- East of 3rd Avenue or the Bowery
- North of the Manhattan Bridge



Appendix 3.**Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of Young Urban Womyn of Color**

FED UP HONEYS



photo credit: © 2004 Fed Up Honeys www.fed-up-honeys.org

The voice of a young womyn of color

I am an interesting young womyn who bores herself to delirium. And a comedian who cant tell a joke. I am a responsible sister and a helpful daughter. I love to be me and yet I am different around others. I am extremely emotional but want to hide my feelings. I have a hard time trusting some and put too much trust into others. This leads to hurt feelings and total vulnerability. I want to be vulnerable but it makes me feel weak. I want to feel weak but no one wants to care for me. I want to care for those I love and want them to care for me more. I never believe anyone can love me as much as I do them. I want to take care of people but don't want them to need me. I am too clingy and never see friends and family. I am a complete idiot but an intelligent person. I am lacking education. I have no communication skills and I am a good listener. I am a good listener who hates to hear people speak. I am a reader who watches way too much TV. I am a good friend and girlfriend but I have few friends and no boyfriend. I am open and bold but hold my tongue when I'm hurt. I put people in their place and yet others walk all over me. I try too hard and yet do nothing at all. I am a procrastinator but I am always early. I help and help and help, and get nothing in return. I am not where I would like to be and want to be so much further. I am very opinionated and yet know nothing about the world. I know where I want to go but I am confused. I know what I want but I am confused. I know how I feel but I am confused. I know what I mean but I confuse myself. I am boring and fun, and innocent and cruel. I am trusting. I am always here. I am always there. I am always needed. I am loved and hated. I am admired. I am spiteful but not jealous. I am very jealous. I am scared of everything. My face shows bravery. I am angry. I am in love. I am confused again... Honestly, I am too much to put into words. - Erica Arenas 2002

This is an example of how a young womyn describing herself manages to convey the difficulty and challenge of being a contradiction... of being many things at once.

**MAKES
ME MAD
stereotypes
of young
urban womyn
of color**

By Indra Rios-Moore; Shamara Allen; Erica Arenas; Jennifer Contreras; Na Jiang; Tiffany Threatts; and Caitlin Cahill

www.fed-up-honeys.org

Center for Human Environments,
Graduate School and University Center
City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue, 6th floor
New York, NY 10016
<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/che/che.htm>
2004

MAKES ME MAD:

Stereotypes of young urban womyn* of color

is a project conducted by a research team of 6 young womyn during the summer of 2002 at the Center for Human Environments, The Graduate Center of CUNY. The project is concerned with exploring two related issues:

1. What is the relationship between the lack of resources (for ex. education) in a community and stereotypes of young urban womyn of color? What are the impacts of stereotyping on young womyn's well-being?

2. How do stereotypes effect and reinforce your self-image? your understanding of your peers? and your community?

Significance

Urban environments are typically characterized and described using aggressive terms, such as "loud, violent, dark, and ghetto", and more often than not little attention is paid to the womyn who inhabit the city, influencing the very fiber of urban environments as **mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, wives, and granddaughters**. This project was specifically designed to emphasize the everyday lives of young womyn to make the voice that is so often ignored the central perspective through which our community, the Lower East Side, is viewed. We decided to focus on a topic that we felt had a significant impact on the lives of young urban womyn of color around the country. We designed a project that illuminates the prevalent stereotypes of our peers, the relationship of those stereotypes to the development of self-image, and the ultimate negative impact of those stereotypes on the viability and health of our communities

As six young womyn, ranging in age from 16-23, we have decided that our standpoint on the effects of city living, the way we are perceived by others, the

***The reason we spell womyn with a "Y" is because the "correct" spelling of woman and women have the words man and men in them.**

How do stereotypes affect you?

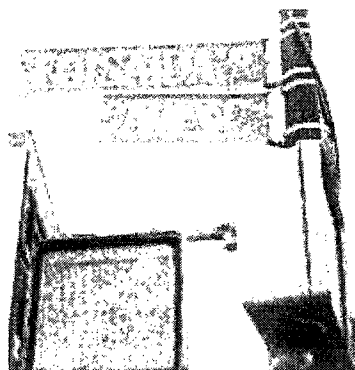
stereotypes that result from those perceptions, and the effects of the lack of resources is one that needs to be shared with our peers, our community, the academic community, and the greater public. By sharing our research, our personal stories, and providing a forum for larger discussion **we hope to lift the veil of misinformation about**

the lives of young womyn of

color in the city, and particularly young womyn on the Lower East Side.

Through extensive discussions we considered the prevalence of mischaracterizations that we have encountered about young womyn of color.

These misinformed portrayals of us leave out all of the subtle and unique differences between individual young womyn. Without considering the challenges that we face in our everyday lives, these portrayals further the already stagnated process of improving the living conditions that many young urban womyn of color face.



This cycle of reinforcing stereotypes leads to the ways we as young womyn begin to explain and understand ourselves, and feeds a struggle that has some resisting stereotypes and others using them to interpret the world around them. It is this fierce struggle that gives our work significance. By shining a light on the subtleties and the uniqueness of the everyday lives of young womyn in the city, **we will expose the way stereotypes oversimplify, reduce and limit us.**

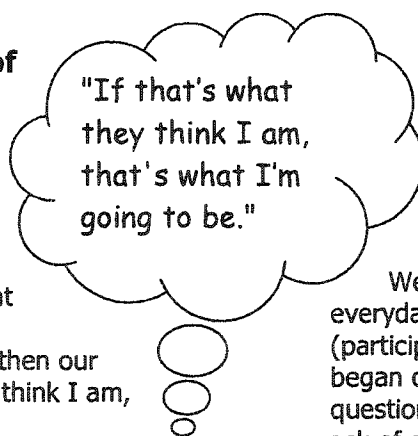
Our research focus and questions developed as a result of a series of discussions about the opportunities, constraints, and contradictions that we recognize in our community and research we conducted on our everyday lives and experiences. One of those conversations led us to a realization



that stereotypical profiles of young urban womyn of color are often used by the very organizations that serve them as an approach to programming and fund raising. This oversimplified approach plays into the "culture of poverty"¹ and loses sight of our specific needs. In the interest of appealing to funding sources, proposals are often written as a cost benefit analysis, explicating the reasons why under-servicing young womyn is more expensive and burdensome to society in the long run. These types of proposals repeatedly use hypothetical profiles of young womyn that feed into all of the common negative stereotypes that are prevalent in the media and in society. An example: Taniesha, whose single mother is a high school drop out on welfare, raising her and her two brothers. Taniesha who has little supervision drops out of high school herself, shoplifts and by the age of 16 finds herself with a police record, pregnant and with HIV. We were enraged by reading one particular such profile that was used in a local non-profit report and this helped us to develop our research focus on stereotypes of young womyn of color. We realized that we, as the target audience for preventive and "at-risk" programming, could give a unique perspective on what we feel are our needs by refuting stereotypes directed at young urban womyn of color.

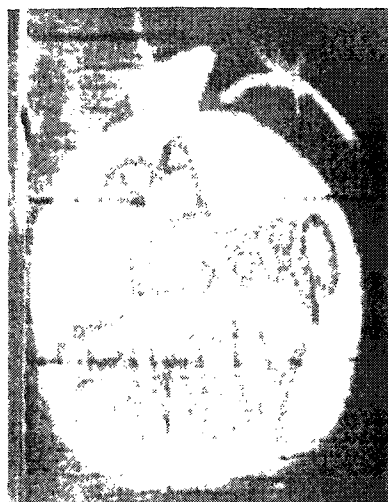
Stereotypes can also be viewed as expectations of who we should be or who we will be.

What is expected of us is very little and when we are constantly faced with these negative stereotypes there is a danger that we will become exactly what they want us to become. These stereotypes keep us down, and then our mind set is "If that is what they think I am, that is what I'm going to be."



Presumably, the main audience for our research would be people outside of our community because it would be simple to assume that these are the people that are misunderstanding us and are the main consumers of stereotypes of young urban womyn of color. But over the course of our discussions we came to the very difficult realization

¹ Theories of the "culture of poverty" argue that some groups of people stay poor because of things they do—their behavior and lifestyle choices. Our contribution to this debate: We resent this and we refuse to take the blame for our own poverty and the poverty of our community.



The 6th Boro is the Lower East Side and exemplifies the strength and potential of the community.

that we too were consumers of these negative stereotypes, so we decided that our primary audience should be our peers. If we only communicated with outsiders that presumes that our peers (and ourselves) don't have the level of agency needed to make change to the predominant perceptions of us and we strongly disagree with that belief.

Methods

During our time spent in the Graduate Center, we conducted research using many different methods including focused discussions, participant observation, and archival research.

We conducted research on our personal everyday lives. Because we are subjects (participant observers) as well as researchers, we began our project by developing a list of research questions that we could answer ourselves as well as ask of other young womyn our age that live in our neighborhood. Questions included: What is a stereotype? Can you give us some examples?; Have you had to deal with stereotypes against you? If so, what were they?; What are stereotypes of young urban womyn of color that you know about?; Do you think that the stereotypes describe you?; If so, how does it work or not work for you?; How do you fight stereotypes? How do stereotypes make you feel?; How does it make you feel about your neighborhood/community?; What are the resources that you think your community lacks?; and How does that affect your lives?

We also did questionnaires, time-logs, self-descriptions, and identified the challenges that we face, concerns, opportunities, and constraints in our lives and neighborhood. We mapped our community, and went on a field trip around our community, identifying spaces that were significant to us and reflected on some of the issues we had pinpointed during our group discussions.

What is a stereotype?

We conducted archival research on our neighborhood. We read reports written by local non-profits in our neighborhood; Community Board #3 FY'2003 District Needs Statement; we conducted internet research on the Lower East Side and the available resources for young womyn; we met with Neil Smith, author of The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City; Yasser Payne and Tamir Stevens, CUNY Graduate Center researchers on the lives of young urban men; and Rosemarie Roberts on her research on dance and history.

Findings

Data collected was focused on addressing the issue that we made the center of our project, the way in which reinforcing stereotypes leads to how young urban womyn explain/ characterize/ understand themselves and others and by extension, negatively effects their communities.

In order to explore and investigate we first identified the prevalent stereotypes.

Stereotypes related to our sexuality and body type:

Promiscuous
Oversexed at a young age
Likely to become pregnant
Not a virgin before marriage
Whores/fast
Trashy dresswear
Have "fat asses"

Stereotypes related to our perceived intelligence:

Uneducated
Undereducated
We don't speak "proper" English

We don't know how to solve our own problems
Ambitionless
Simple

Stereotypes related to our supposed class level:

Poor
Unemployed
Lazy
Welfare dependent

Stereotypes related to our behavior:

Unable to protect ourselves
Too emotional
Sloppy
We act like animals
Loud and obnoxious
Boisterous
Talk too much
We can't go anywhere because we don't know how to act
Immature
Have crack babies

According to the dictionary a **stereotype** is a standardized mental picture. It represents an oversimplified opinion or prejudiced attitude.

Stereotypes related to our relationships:

Dependent on men
Don't understand men
Involved in abusive relationships
Not able to have trust other womyn
Womyn who fight for womyn's rights are feminist and/or lesbian and will end up alone

What do the stereotypes leave out?

It's clear that **these stereotypes are very limited in their scope and unable to fully encompass the complexities of individual lives.** From our own research (our self-descriptions and focused discussions) and from conversations with other

young womyn, we identified some of the specific aspects that stereotypes are insensitive to.

The stereotypes leave out:

- background
- struggle
- lack of support
- the inherent diversity of every womyn
- the abuse that some womyn face
- the challenges the young womyn sometimes face that leave them in compromised stereotypical situations
- the aspects of life that make this more complicated
- the true multi-faceted stories of how/why negative things happen to young womyn
- the ability for young womyn to think for themselves

• **everything that makes each life special and unique!**

The ways young urban womyn relate to or resist stereotypes:

As the above-mentioned caricatures are out in the world being manufactured and emphasized in the media, music, magazines, etc., young womyn begin to see these stereotypes as the only options for projecting themselves and they become the axis around which everything revolves. Young womyn define themselves against and/or through stereotypes.

We found that an analysis of our research of our own lives--our self-descriptions--provided ample examples of how we use, relate, and resist stereotypes. Researcher Erica Arenas shared, "Sometimes, as a defense mechanism, people will adopt stereotypes as their own. If you take the stereotype and make it yours then there is no way that it can be used against you. When we do this we sometimes lose sight of the negativity in the stereotype and we begin to use these stereotypes

"I'm Puerto Rican, I can't speak proper English"



This mural, "Every Day is Mother's Day", pays respect to the mothers and strong women of our community.

as our excuses for why we are the way we are and why we do the things we do. For example: "Don't make me get black up in here" or "I'm Puerto Rican, I can't speak proper English".

In her self-description, researcher Shamara Allen shared, "[I am a] **bearer of life, lover, fighter, mad, mad, mad, self-involved...a member of an African-American family, a slave's great, great granddaughter, troubled, angry, thoughtful, Black, stereotypical, a statistic.**" By combining words that are contradictory and connected she simultaneously sheds and uses the stereotypes to describe the way she views herself and the way she thinks she is viewed from the outside. By doing so she acknowledges the connection of perceptions with the way she constructs a self-image.

Researcher Indra Rios-Moore writes: "I am a Black Latina without the characteristic figure that goes with skin as brown as mine and I struggle with that." Recognizing that there is a stereotypical Black body shape, and that to some degree she has bought into that picture of beauty she reveals an inner dialogue and struggle over what that means about how she feels about her own body.

What kinds of negative affects on young womyn and the community do these stereotypes have?

Again, **stereotypes can also be viewed as expectations of who we should be or who we will be.** The lack of space to define

ourselves not only affects our own self-image but also the way we perceive our peers through the stereotype. In a nutshell: If you can't see yourself for who you are because you have an aggressive wall surrounding you- you probably can't see others for who they are. This relationship to aggressive stereotypical behavior is naturally defensive, leaving peer against peer, without allies or understanding. Stereotyped youth are left in a reactive position instead of being able to have control over how they are defined.

Due to the stereotypes that are already being circulated out in the world, impoverished communities that are the supposed producers of the stereotype are seen as self-destructive and are thus often under-funded because the investment is seen as a waste. The assumptions about the lack of potential serves to initiate a cycle by which the lack of resources help to produce the stereotype. **Is a funding stream likely to invest in a community that is viewed as being self-destructive and negative?**



Pollution from the Con Edison plant affects Public Housing residents living nearby.

What are the resources that the Lower East Side community lacks? And how does the lack of these resources affect young womyn's lives?

Community organizations, the Community Board, our focus groups, and our research team all tend to agree that the Lower East Side community needs better funded schools, more low income housing, funding for heavily used community programs, and better sanitation. While many non-profit funding proposals tend to address the need for anti-smoking

and pregnancy prevention programming we feel that those needs are but the tip of the iceberg. **Here we are offering a more preventative approach that identifies needs that are specific to our community.** We want to emphasize connections between the lack of resources and the impact on the lives of young urban womyn of color.

The real effects of the lack of...

Education:

The stereotype of young urban womyn being uneducated is often predicated by the fact that many urban schools that are populated by "minorities" are **under-servicing** their population, with **little resources to facilitate the learning of urban youth**. Often, the depressive school environment leads some urban youth to dropout in an effort towards self-preservation. Once young urban womyn leave school their ability to earn a living wage is decreased and their already impoverished living conditions are worsened or at the very least become more difficult to improve, which reinforces the stereotype that most of us are poor and welfare dependent.

Health:

We are concerned about our environment and our health. The fact that the Lower East Side does not have adequate garbage pickup—leading to rodent infestation and garbage on the street—does not reflect **our desire for healthy and beautiful surroundings**. Not only is it unhealthy (the Lower East Side community has serious environmental health issues), it is also demoralizing to live in an environment that is not cared for. The fact that many members of low-income communities cannot afford health care does not mean that they do not care for their health. But it does reinforce a sentiment that perhaps low-income community members are not worth the expense of care. The lack of allocated resources feeds into a cycle of deprivation in which low-income communities internalize these issues and in turn abuse themselves, blame themselves and feel out of control.

Employment:

Without job access, training, and minimum wage enforcement, many youth are left with very few constructive and legal ways to occupy their time or earn money during summers, and are not encouraged to look into future career and educational opportunities. The recent cuts in summer youth programming/jobs is a case in point. This inevitably leads young people into **a succession of jobs that are underpaying** (if they are able to get jobs at all), having little opportunity for upward mobility or growth and may even force some to illegal means of support.

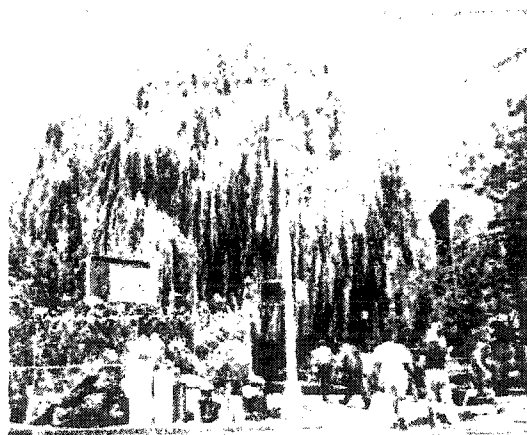
Housing:

Without well paying jobs it is impossible to be a contributing member of your community and pay the increasing rents that come along with gentrification. To stay in the community that they love and know many are forced to live with more than the permitted number of people in small apartments. When all else fails they are forced into a cold and harsh shelter system with too high a need and a limited number of beds.

Overcrowded homes are not good studying environments for young people. This affects our education. High rents increase anxiety levels in the whole family and also means that every member of the family, including young school aged womyn, works to help pay the bills.

Money:

As young womyn **we are also concerned members of a community that has financial needs that deeply effect our wellbeing and the available opportunities.** What impoverished communities are lacking most greatly is financial investment that gives them a chance to serve each other and create mutually beneficial financial relationships. Small businesses that are owned by community members will most likely be more tied to the surrounding community and more likely to hire people from that community; but without opportunity to get loans due to lack of capital, those businesses can not exist. Financial education and micro-lending institutions that are committed to investing in the area will help to remedy the effect of low-income community disinvestment.



Our community can be so beautiful!

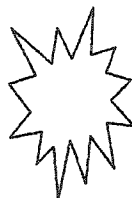
In Conclusion

The ultimate and most beneficial means to an end of the negative effects of such a stark lack of resources is **a community that is self-sufficient and self-concerned.** It is a priority to have young womyn who can feel connected and have a desire to contribute and be involved in their community. But there have to be ways to become involved in the community.

Our research, the community board, our informal conversations with other young womyn in our neighborhood, and archival research has identified several important ways to build a stronger and more positive community, one that is able to stand in the face of the stereotypes that its children have been pegged with.

Community building needs from young womyn's perspective

- Better support systems for youth and families.
- A feeling of being welcomed
- A place where youth can hang out and know for sure that they are safe, welcome, and cared for that is operated by people that they can relate to.
- A centralized information center where young people can go to find out what resources are available to them.
- Programs and loosely organized recreation centers that don't have forced activities.
- Places for children to play that are safe, clean, and better maintained.

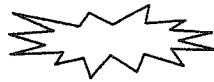


- Schools that better equip youth with the basic academic skills they need and provide an alternative support system to the family.
- Trustworthy policing and better safety measures that are less imposing on the community.
- Family training programs that help to guide families in learning how to communicate with each other and cultivate nurturing relationships.
- Free counseling and family therapy that is sensitive to cultural aversions to outside intervention.
- Strengthened tenant patrols.
- Closer subway stops and increased bus service as well as manageable fares.
- Increased senior citizen and free meal programs.
- Preservation of affordable performance and workspace for local artist and community groups
- Preservation of gardens and other open spaces that add to the character of our community.



WE NEED:

1. Teachers that young community residents can relate to (currently the majority are white/outside to our community), learning/teaching resources that young women and men of color can relate to and opportunities for families to be a bigger part of the school process for their children
2. Drug treatment programs that stress alternatives to incarceration, instill hope, and that are designed to be culturally sensitive.
3. Increased funding for year round job skills and employment programs for youth.
4. More low-income housing. The 80/20 mixed income housing that sets aside 20% occupancy for low income tenants is not enough.
5. Free debt and money management programs, and increased access to low interest small business loans.



Researcher Erica Arenas sums up an important issue for us: **"Our community lacks centers where teenagers can be themselves without having to worry about so many pressures.** Places where they can just relax and chill with friends. A place where they are offered opportunities for their future, which educates them on the opportunities waiting for them and what they are capable of accomplishing; **a safe and comfortable place."**

"Safe and comfortable" is defined as a space where deficit models are left at the door, where no one is trying to shape us to their agenda following a very reductive outsider/missionary approach that aims to "save" young womyn rather than provide opportunities for us to use our own natural gifts for **SELF empowerment.** A safe and comfortable space is organized by members of our own community and is fully integrated with our community.

If we cannot yet get this "safe and comfortable place" that our community's youth are in such dire need of, we decided that we should at least start by creating a safe and comfortable virtual space.

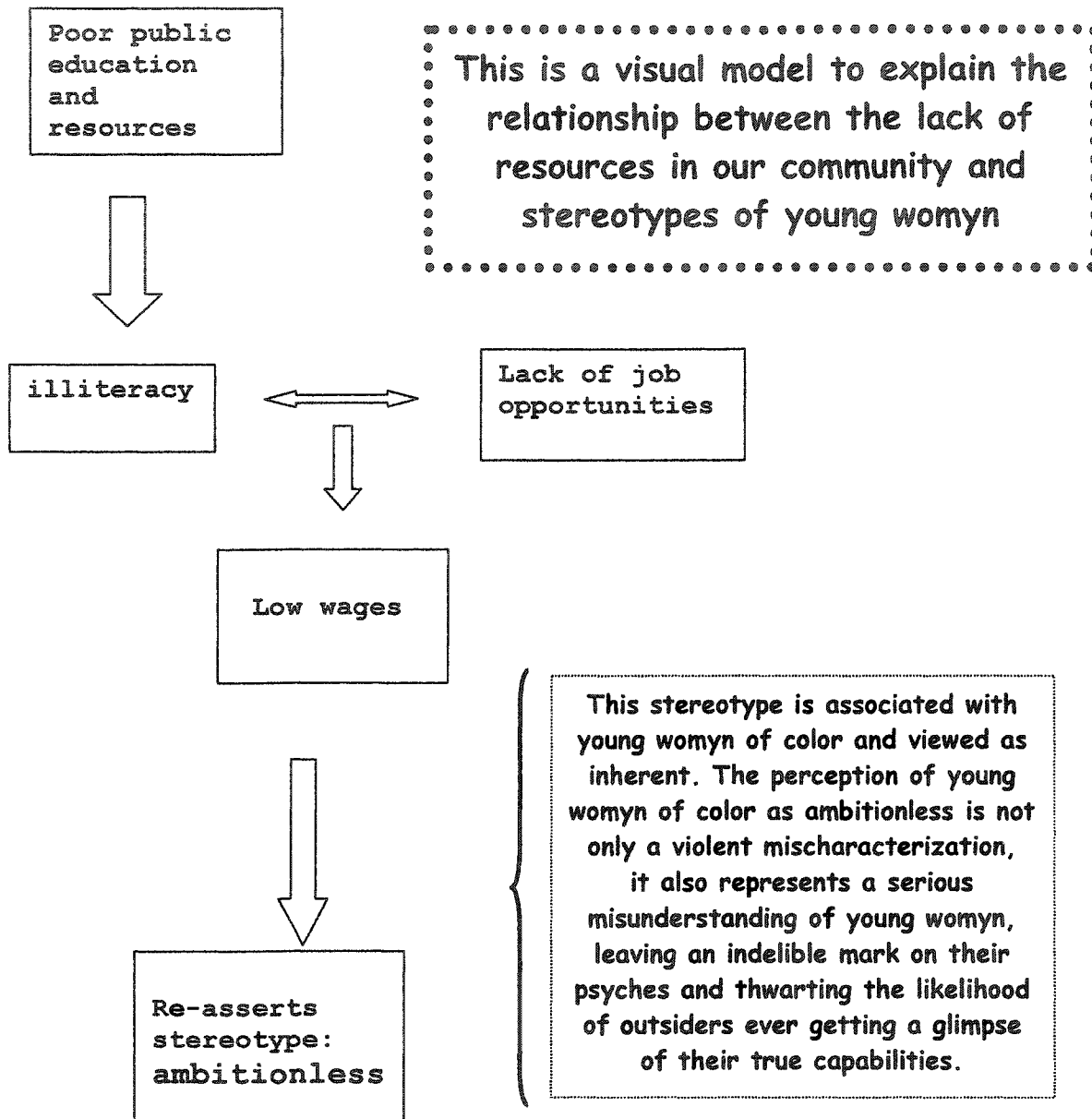
By creating the fed-up-honeys website **www.fed-up-honeys.org** we hope to encourage expression and foster a space that will give peers and youth alike a chance to voice themselves, challenge, and complicate the stereotypes and misconceptions of our peers and communities.

Through the fed-up-honeys website and our sticker campaign we want to stress **the importance of self-directed and community supported action for change.** Using the vehicles of action research, research products such as our stickers, and the website we want to help in the process of motivating and taking part in a revitalization of active community participation. We believe that by simply living your truth and encouraging others to do the same, you can participate in your community's growth. In the process of being true to yourself and the network of people that make up your community **you can help to knock down the myths that hold our communities down.**

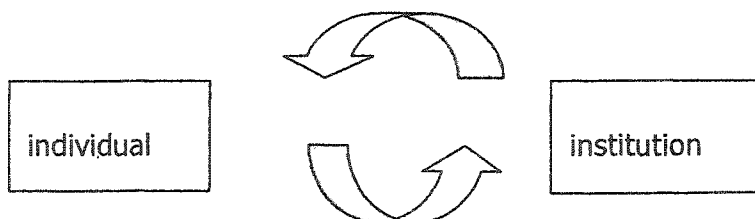


THANK YOU

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The relationship between failing institutions and the individual sets external and also internal standards for young womyn of color, one informing the other.



Too often young women take responsibility for failing institutions that underserve and undereducate them, leading to a personal sense of failure.

Community building needs according to young womyn

Here is a list of resources that are lacking on the Lower East Side that we developed from our research. We present these needs as a first step towards taking action and making change...

What do YOU think?

Please let us know!!! We will post your opinion on our website

www.fed-up-honeys.org

e-mail us at:
all_honeys@fed-up-honeys.org

Education Needs

- Preservation and restoration of local libraries and increased funding for multi-lingual and multi-cultural library programming Increased funding for affordable daycare.
- Increased funding and resources to improve the quality of public education and student attendance programs.
- Increased education health facilities, health and wellness, child abuse awareness, elder abuse awareness, and domestic violence programs.
- Increased funds for public health outreach and prevention programs to raise community awareness.
- Information about important women that are not characterized as feminists.
- Lack of resources in school – more enrichment programs.
- Information about important women in our community or lives reflected in education programming.
- Teachers that young community residents can relate to (now the majority are white), resources that relate to young women and men of color, opportunities for families to be a bigger part of the school process for their children.
- Literacy programs to combat the insufficient schooling.
- Smaller schools. The recent trend of housing many smaller boutique schools in one building still has the same problems of warehouse schooling.
- Getting to college is one issue, but staying is another. College Prep programs that help youth deal with negotiating the systems that are already at colleges for people who have knowledge of them from the start. Prep programs that help new students from the community negotiate classist structures, culture shock, develop study habits, build credit, negotiate school loans, financial aid, and make the best use of the resources that are supplied by college. A support system for kids once they get there.
- Programs for children with learning disabilities, which are designed against the traditional Special Education model.
- Ethics courses

What else? what do you need?

Health Needs

- Increased sanitation
- Health centers
- Drug treatment programs that stress alternatives instill hope and that are designed to be culturally sensitive and directed.
- Free health care for all students, including dental.
- What else? ...

Employment Needs

- Increased funding for job skills and employment programs for youth.
- Enforcement of minimum wage and job safety regulations.
- Internship programs that are career oriented.
- Summer programs that offer employment and activities.
- Stronger job development programs and vocational training programs as well as legitimate 2-year vocational colleges that are free or of low cost
- Apprenticeships that lead to jobs.
- What else? ...

Housing Needs

- Space for kids to stay in case of dire need, emergency housing that is not a "shelter".
- Increased funding for new and existing housing.
- More low income affordable housing
- What else? ...

Money

- Free debt management programs
- Low interest small business loans and access to money management courses.
- What else? ...

We really are interested in **your** point of view.

We will include your comments on our website.

e-mail us at: all_honeys@fed-up-honeys.org

Or tear this off and send it to us in the mail:

Fed-Up-Honeys / Center for Human Environments
City University of New York, Graduate Center
365 Fifth Avenue, 6th floor New York, NY 10016

What are your needs? What are the most important issues to you in your community? Why?

your name: _____ age: _____
please include your contact information (e-mail or snail mail address)

Stereotype Stickers

By now we are assuming, or at least hoping, that most of you have come across one or more of our "Stereotype Stickers" which are up around the entire Lower East Side and other parts of the city.

Most advertisements seen on public transportation and around the city are discriminatory and sexist, so what we created is something mocking those ads but instead of selling you sex, we're making you think.

Those of you who have spotted them must be wondering exactly what our motive is with these "Stereotype Stickers". That's simple. We are looking to plant a seed in the minds of society. We wanted our stickers to upset you to the point of inspiration. We want our beautiful, young, urban womyn of color to realize what it is we have against us and we hope it will give you all the motivation to go against the grain; to prove everyone wrong. If you are checking out the web site or are reading our newsletter right this very second, then our job is half done. From this point on it is completely up to you to decide whether or not you are willing to accept these stereotypes or reject them.

Be smart. Be independent.

Be strong. Be womyn.

Young Urban Womyn of Color are...

Likely to Become Teen Moms

Stereotype #1
www.fed-up-honeys.org

Young Urban Womyn of Color are...

In Abusive Relationships

Stereotype #3
www.fed-up-honeys.org

Young Urban Womyn of Color are...

Promiscuous

Stereotype #5
www.fed-up-honeys.org

Young Urban Womyn of Color are...

Lazy and on Welfare

Stereotype #2
www.fed-up-honeys.org

Young Urban Womyn of Color are a ...

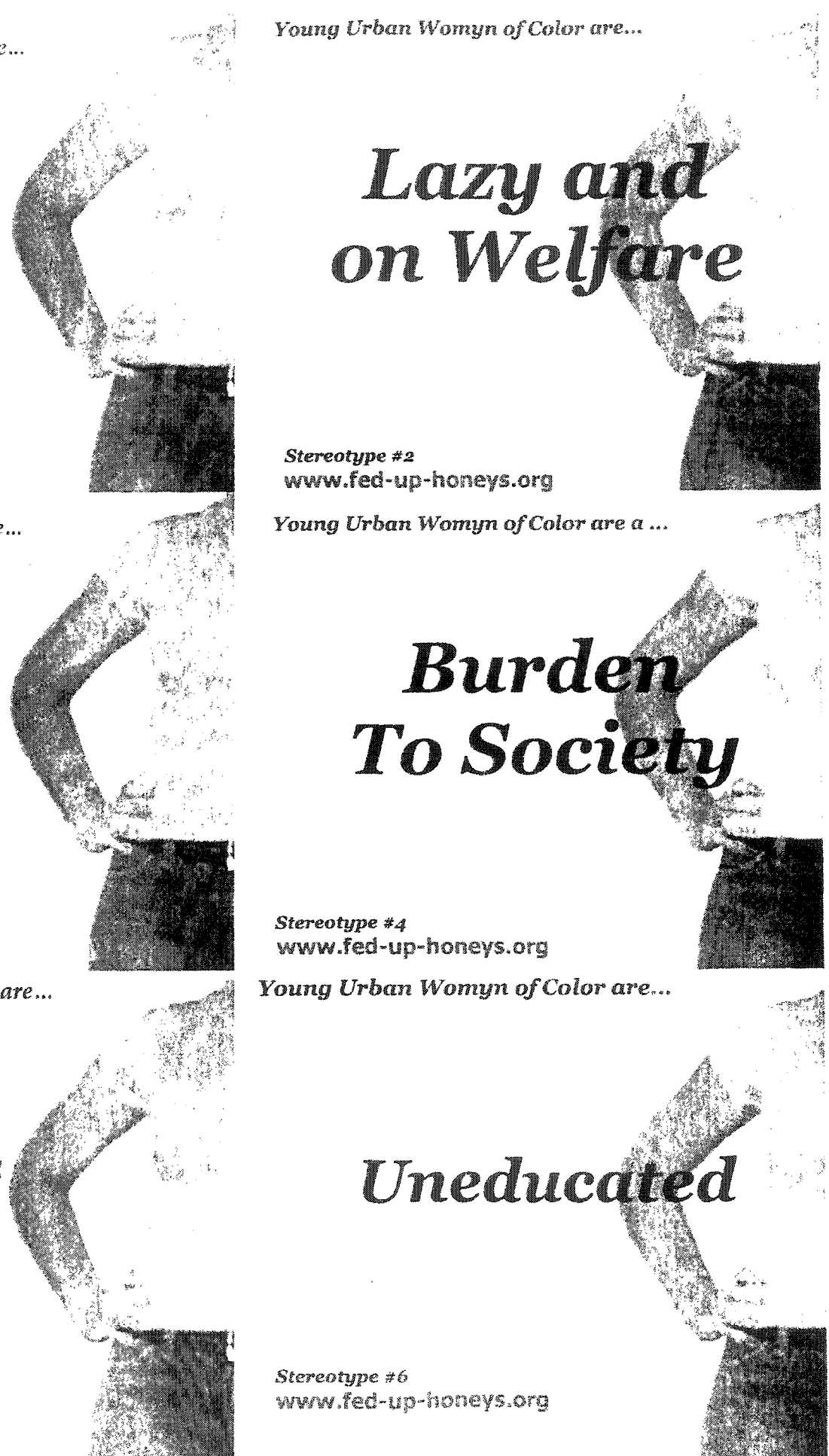
Burden To Society

Stereotype #4
www.fed-up-honeys.org

Young Urban Womyn of Color are...

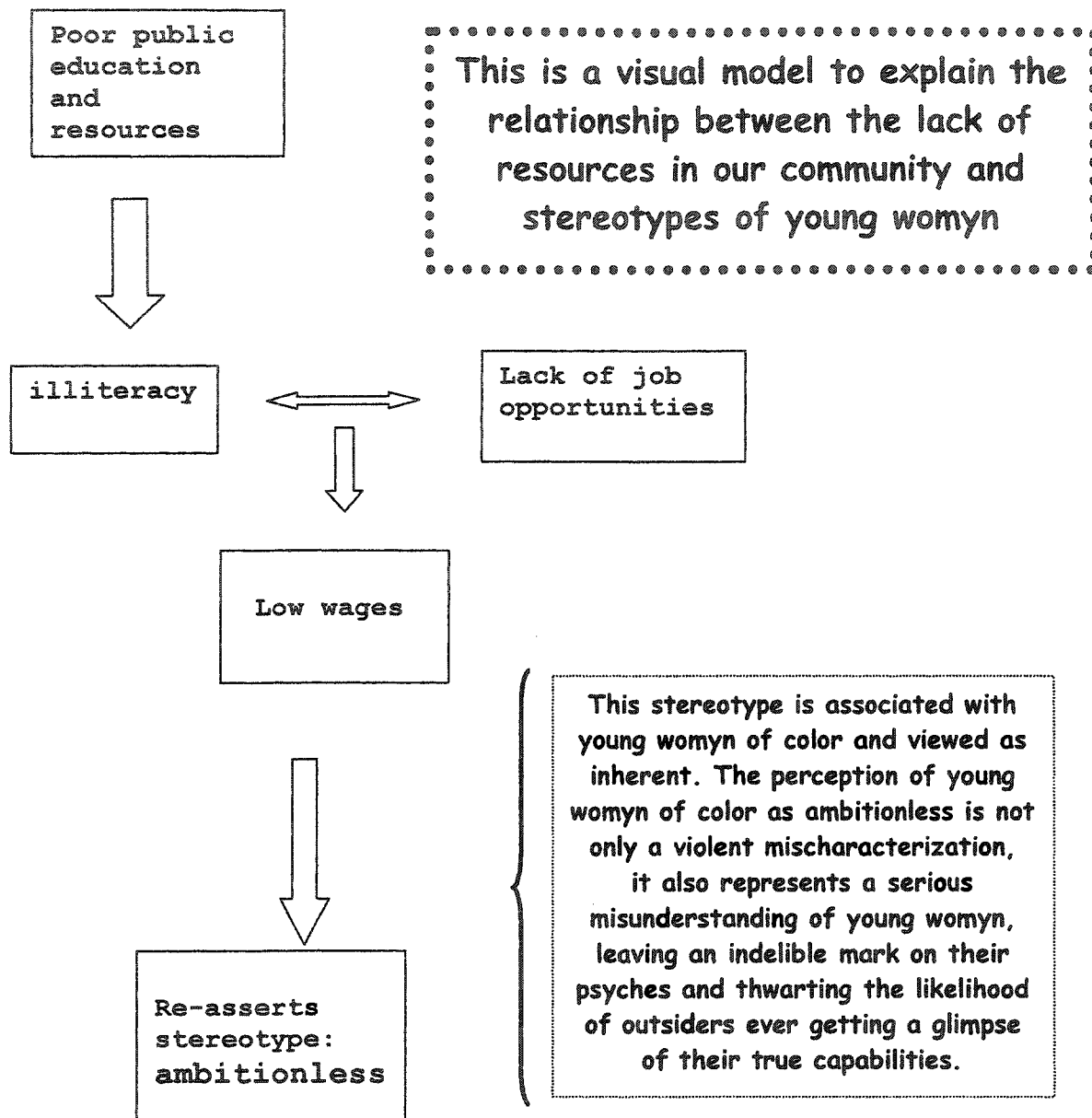
Uneducated

Stereotype #6
www.fed-up-honeys.org

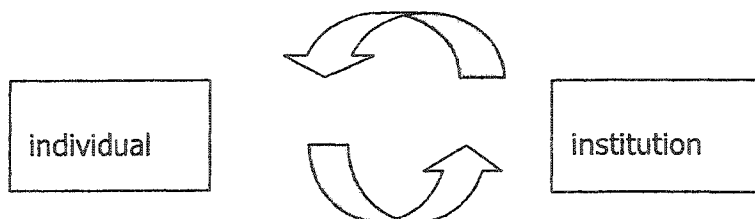


Appendix 4.

Visual Model to explain relationship between lack of resources and stereotypes of young women



The relationship between failing institutions and the individual sets external and also internal standards for young womyn of color, one informing the other.



Too often young women take responsibility for failing institutions that underserve and undereducate them, leading to a personal sense of failure.

Appendix 5.

Community based strategies for challenging gentrification

Local community-based and city-wide organizations have played an extremely important role in challenging gentrification through securing important legal protections and through their ongoing work fighting for affordable housing and against displacement. Notable organizations active in the Lower East Side include: The Lower East Side Anti-Displacement Committee; Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES); Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence; Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB); The Lower East Side Tenant Union; the Trust for Public Land; and The New York Coalition for the Preservation of Community Gardens.

Within a community planning framework there are four critical fronts for “stabilizing a gentrifying neighborhood” and forming a “basis for an anti-displacement strategy” (Rose, 2001). The following strategies come from several sources including PolicyLink's “Beyond Gentrification: Tools for Equitable Development” (www.policylink.org) and the Fifth Avenue Committee's “Displacement booklet” (www.fifthave.org). (Also check out the good work of the organizations including: the Dudley Street Initiative, www.dsni.org; and Strategic Actions for Just Economy, www.saje.net):

1. *The preservation and expansion of the supply of affordable housing.* This involves the enforcement of rent stabilization policies and the development of non-profit or limited equity cooperative housing. For example, in a recent victory (2002), squatters on the Lower East Side (working with the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board) won the right to legally occupy the buildings they had squatted

after years of negotiation with the city. Other strategies include the establishment of an affordable housing fund; housing set asides; facilitating the construction of SRO (single room occupancy) development; the anti-displacement tax-credit; and the establishment of a "displacement free zone," among others.

2. *Controlling land for community development.* This practice involves the strategic use of zoning policies and community land trusts. For example, in 1999 Bette Midler and the Trust for Public Land financed a public land trust to protect over fifty community gardens on the Lower East Side from being threatened by development. Other strategies include mandatory inclusionary zoning and the use of eminent domain by non-profit organizations to acquire property for public use in order to prioritize the retention of current residents.
3. *Income and Asset Creation.* Amenities such as transportation, day care, and retail services are important anchors in the community, along with the provision of living-wage jobs in the community. Employment linkage programs, job training and placement programs would connect residents to job opportunities and enable them to fully participate in the economy.
4. *Financing strategies.* Until the mid-1980s much of the Lower East Side was redlined, and thus there was no available capital for community business or real estate. An important exception was the Lower East Federal Credit Union which has provided small loans specifically to community members. Credit unions represent an important institutional financial base within the community.

Some of these strategies have been used to protect community-based interests and have been effective in creating pockets of resistance to urban economic restructuring on the Lower East Side. However, the power of market forces have prevailed and is very visibly transforming the neighborhood environment in spite of the concerted effort, energy, and willpower of many community interests. While the above strategies address institutional and public policy practices which specifically deal with housing and land issues, they don't speak to the issue of cultural representations which I address at length in my dissertation and which I would argue is a critical (and complementary) component of an effective anti-gentrification movement.

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