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'Crunk', 'cracking' and 'choreographies':
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physical activity in the lives of young
people from culturally diverse urban
neighborhoods

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Atencio, Matthew, 'Crunk', 'cracking' and 'choreographies': the place and meaning of health and physical activity in the lives of young people from culturally diverse urban neighborhoods, PhD thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, 2006.
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‘CRUNK’, ‘CRACKING’, AND ‘CHOREOGRAPHIES’:

**THE PLACE AND MEANING OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN
THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE
URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the
degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

MATTHEW ATENCIO

(Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy)

The Faculty of Education

2006

CERTIFICATION

I, Matthew Atencio, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualification at any other academic institution.

Signed

Matthew Atencio

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not be possible without the support of a number of individuals. I would like to thank:

All the young people who participated in my study, for sharing their incredible life stories with me. They are the heart and soul of this thesis.

Jan Wright, who as my supervisor constantly encouraged me to do things that I never thought were possible. Your critical eye and unwavering commitment to my work will always be appreciated. Quite simply, I could not have asked for a better mentor.

Valerie Harwood, also as my supervisor, who always inspired me to think critically and philosophically. This thesis is a direct reflection of her theoretical acumen and commitment to making the world a better place by challenging the status quo.

Pauline, Daniel, Pip, Georgia, Melissa, and Madeleine Lysaght for generously taking me into their homes during the course of my study. I will always be grateful that I had such a great and fun-loving Australian family.

Ros Westbrook for her generosity and great wit.

Tim Canosa, for kick arounds, North Gong, pizza, and then Champions League after long days of writing. Good times.

The U.S. Gang (Bernie, Susie, Renee, Mike, Kristy, and Chris) for their friendship, patience, and support over the past four years.

Robyn Griffiths, Mike Huebsch, and Karen McRae for helping to bring this thesis to an end. You made the home stretch so much easier.

Kanako Kotera for her samurai spirit.

My family for their unconditional and priceless support of all my traveling, academic, and sporting endeavors. This thesis is for you. I hope you're proud.

ABSTRACT

As a number of writers have pointed out (Cole, 1996; Giardina, 2003; Kirk, 1999; McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2003; Rail, 1998, Silk & Andrews, 2001), in Western societies individuals construct their plural and fluid subjectivities by engaging with broader cultural discourses existing in a 'larger global frame of reference' (Giardina, 2003, p.66). From this perspective, this thesis explores the ways young people take up multiple subjectivities by translating and appropriating the 'texts' of a multivalent global sport and 'physical' culture in subversive, (re)productive, and conformist ways. The primary mode of analysis involved investigating how these 'mobile subjectivities' (Rail, 1998, p. xv) reflected the young people's specific class, gender, and cultural positionings, as well as their biographical histories and geographic backgrounds (Kirk, 1999).

The study in this thesis simultaneously appropriated and critiqued several aspects of ethnographic research. Drawing from postcolonial and poststructural theoretical frameworks, qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and observations were used to investigate the place and meaning of health and physical activity in the lives of young people from diverse 'racial', 'ethnic', and diasporic backgrounds. The young people's use of their urban neighborhood physical activity spaces was mapped and analyzed using methods informed by cultural geography. The analysis that was conducted paid specific attention to the unstable power relations inherent in the research interactions, and multiple and contradictory narratives were produced.

Results of the study revealed that the young people came to exist as 'healthy' subjects by engaging with physical culture discourses concerned with the maintenance, representation, and regulation of the body through dieting and exercise (Kirk, 1999). The young people made moral judgments about health through a cyclical association of appearance, attitude, and behavior. Healthiness was considered to be a desirable state of being that could be achieved through the adoption of specific eating and exercise practices. According to the young people,

adherence to these practices could be read off the body. This belief was crystallized in their descriptions of ‘fat’ people and ‘couch potatoes’ who they considered to be lazy, unmotivated, and poor decision makers. However, in later comments the young people defined health in much more complex and contradictory ways, in relation to their gendered and racialized backgrounds. They eventually took up and contested the available health discourses in very diverse and subtle ways from each other and in comparison to their white counterparts found in other research studies.

Another point of analysis was formulated to address the social impacts of space on the cultures of basketball and dancing. An examination of the young people’s spatial movements through their interview texts indicated that both institutional and ‘informal’ basketball and dance spaces played a significant role in the promulgation of gendered and ‘racial’ power relationships.

In the park basketball courts, the young African-American men with the most talent and physical strength were able to exclude and constrain other young men and women from participating. In so doing, these young men were able to take up positions of power within social hierarchies that privileged and (re)produced their hegemonic ‘black’ masculinities. The social practices which underpinned these unequal power relationships were linked with seductive ‘empowerment through sport’ discourses operating in the young people’s impoverished urban neighborhoods.

Analysis also revealed that the institutional dance spaces within the local high school (re)produced certain bodily practices which served to exclude and marginalize the ‘black’ young women in my study. Particularly in the advanced dance classes and programs, social practices were (re)produced which served to favor the ‘thin’ white young women and their bodies. The ‘black’ young women in my study were positioned as ‘hyper-sexual’ and ‘sloppy’, and thus incapable, because of their devalued forms of ‘physical capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984). Yet, these ‘black’ young women were able to deploy unique performative acts through their

bodies in order to recoup their deficit positioning as the ‘black’ female ‘Other’. The diverse and complex ways that these young women used the dance spaces to refigure their subjectivities illustrates that gender and ‘race’ are experienced differentially, and are not unifying and fixed categories.

From these analyses I suggest that health, sport, and physical activity discourses aligned with power configurations in a variety of institutional, cultural, and geographic contexts profoundly shapes young people’s lives in psychic and corporeal ways. At the same time, young people constitute their multiple and fluid subjectivities by actively appropriating, (re)producing, and contesting these discourses in ways that serve to disrupt ‘normalizing’ practices and knowledge.

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CHAPTER ONE: POINTS OF DEPARTURE

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This thesis investigates the ways that a group of young people from diverse cultural, ‘ethnic’¹, and ‘racial’² backgrounds living in urban backgrounds come to take up nuanced and pluralized subjectivities by engaging with a nexus of sport, physical activity, and health discourses. Because this thesis takes up the stance that young people can actively participate in the processes of their self-formation, I seek to explain how the young people come to exist as subjects by negotiating these discourses in often subversive, (re)productive, and/or conformist ways. In order to deliver a more sophisticated knowledge of the young people’s lives, I further explore how their life experiences are now shaped by profound social, economic, and cultural processes that are specific to post-industrial Western societies. It has been argued that de-industrialization and globalization have created new technologies and rapid exchanges of knowledge, which have supported the migration and settlement of diasporic³ people (Nayak, 2003). What becomes crucial in these conditions is to understand how the ‘global’ and the

¹ I use the term ‘ethnic’ and ‘ethnicity’ (surrounded by quote marks in the text) to illustrate that there is nothing fixed or objective about these concepts and to critique the ways they have been arbitrarily defined and deployed in essentialist, homogenizing, and assimilationist ways. While the ‘ethnicity’ paradigm is widely used in the West, it fails to engage with the diversity within ‘ethnic’ groups and identities which are structured along the lines of migration, settlement, class, and gender and ignores different positions of power (Anthias, 1998).

² The use of ‘race’ and ‘racial’ surrounded by quote marks throughout this thesis suggests that ‘race’ is a social, political, and historical construct based around the categorization of skin color and thus has no ‘real’ or ‘objective’ meaning.

³ ‘Diaspora’ and the ‘diasporic’ condition denote the dynamic processes of trans-national and trans-‘ethnic’ migration and settlement (Anthias, 1998). Following Anthias (1998), Brah (1996), Gilroy (1993), and Hall (1992), I use this concept to focus on the processes whereby individuals are ‘constructed in and through *difference*’ (Anthias, 1998, p.566, author’s emphasis) rather than ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ commonalities. By focusing on the processes of globalization and cultural ‘hybridity’ I seek to destabilize and transgress seemingly fixed social unities based around the problematic concepts of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’.

‘local’ have become intertwined and work to create new spaces and subjectivities for young people.

It is also of critical import for this thesis to extricate the ways intersecting discourses of sport, physical activity, and health come to be allied with neo-liberal imperatives that have currency in Western societies and come to (re)produce specific ‘normalizing’ practices and knowledge. The current neo-liberal trend within Western capitalist countries such as the United States, Australia, and Canada is to advance free market and unrestricted trade policies with minimal government intervention. Coinciding with this de-regulation of market economies and de-investment in public services, trans-national corporations have thrived while massive economic disparities have emerged within both developed and ‘Third World’ countries, further marginalizing the world’s poor (Dasgupta, 2004; Petras & Veldmeyer, 2001; Sklar, 1995). Yet, even as the world’s poor become poorer, within this neo-liberal climate these individuals are expected to govern themselves in order to become responsible and productive citizens:

Neo-liberalism reinstates liberal principles, including the ideas that citizens are rational, autonomous actors and that the state should avoid excessive intervention into its citizens’ affairs and welfare. Under neo-liberalism, we are encouraged to become ‘subject to ourselves’, to exercise a kind of regulated freedom as part of the operation of political power. This includes undertaking self-reflection and self-improvement activities that dovetail with governmental objectives as part of our efforts to achieve individual success and happiness. (Lupton, 1999, p.289)

In these neo-liberal conditions, it has been noted by several youth researchers (Lupton, 1997; Packwood & Sikes, 1996; Raby, 2002; Wyn & White, 1997) that the subjectivities, experiences, and characteristics of individuals have become over-determined and over-generalized. Often, young people have been categorized according to age, locating them in a unique, albeit chaotic and troublesome, life stage. Raby (2002), for instance, posits that ‘(a) powerful,

pervasive story about adolescence is that it is a clear, predictable (but turbulent) stage that teenagers inevitably undergo as they grow into adulthood' (p. 1). In this context, adolescent youth are considered to be confused, immature, poor decision makers, risk takers, and existing in a state of need, particularly within poor urban contexts (Malone & Hasluck, 1998; Wyn & White, 1997). Kraack and Kenway (2002) suggest that these popular beliefs parallel societal concerns about adolescent youth that often 'translates into a distrust and fear of all young people and into constructions of them as deficit, "bad" or threatening' (p. 145). These simplistic understandings of young people have served to reify the popular notion that young people are social 'problems' who need to regulate and control themselves in order to be 'saved'. In addition, interventionist institutions such as schools are expected to play a vital role in helping young people to 'save' themselves in order to transform them into 'better' citizens and future adults.

It is clear from above that popular and institutional discourses serve to position young people from low-income urban areas as being 'at risk' and 'underserved'. These young people are faced with the task of 'fixing' and redefining themselves in a period of dislocation and rebellion. The dominant rationales depicting young people as existing in a 'problematic' life stage and in need of 'saving' have also come to be institutionalized within the realms of sport, physical activity, and health. As such, I turn my attention towards investigating the ways young people and their bodies have been constituted as 'deficit' and in need of self-improvement through their sport, physical activity and 'physical culture'⁴ (Kirk, 1999, 2004) engagements. Sport and physical activity are widely assumed to provide neutral and safe spaces through which young people can learn positive life lessons and begin to make appropriate life choices. Participation in sport and physical activity is purported to be inherently beneficial and taken up by young people in equal ways, providing them with similar subjectivities, meanings, and increased life chances. Drummond (2001), for instance, points out that sport is

⁴ Kirk (1999, 2004) argues that through their engagements with a popular 'physical culture' individuals are expected to represent and manage their bodies in relation to highly regulative and normative practices that are associated with health, sport, and physical activity.

often conceptualized as being a positive influence in the lives of young men, providing them with the values of hard work, team orientation, and sportsmanship. Walberg (1997) in his preface to a special issue of *Quest* devoted to physical activity and sport for ‘underserved’ youth notes that:

Early opportunity and experience foster adult character and behavior. As the ancients knew, a sound mind, sound character, and a sound body foster one another. Acquired in school or in extramural settings, health, physical skill, and dexterity lead to feelings of self-worth – especially among youth. People with higher regard for themselves are unlikely to engage in behaviors that are beneath them. Sports, too, teach ethics... Teamwork – what we think makes Americans distinctive can also build virtue. (p. 2)

This quote aptly describes how within neo-liberal Western societies sport and physical activity participation is assumed to be inherently beneficial for all young people. Sport and physical activity participation seemingly endows young people with stronger and ‘fitter’ bodies, with beneficial life skills, and the capacity to envision a better future. Walberg’s expression of the belief that sport and physical activity fosters personal development and enables young people to become ‘virtuous’ citizens has been taken up by numerous community sport, recreation, and physical activity programs and delivered to urban youth from diasporic, ‘ethnic’, and ‘racial’ minority backgrounds (see Hellison, 1995; Hellison, Martinek, & Cutforth, 1996; Martinek & Hellison, 1997). At the heart of this deployment of neo-liberal morality within urban impoverished communities is the assumption that sport and physical activity participation has the capacity to recuperate racialized⁵ ‘blacks’⁶ who are often understood to be ‘pathologically

⁵ I use the term ‘racialized’ or ‘racially marginalized’ to signify the ‘peculiar intersection of race and class by referring to those social groups or fractions of social groups that are, or traditionally have been, deeply excluded from social powers, rights, goods, or services in racial terms or on racial grounds’ (Goldberg, 1993, p.265).

⁶ I surround the terms ‘black’ in quotes because my analysis contests the widely-held assumption that there is a static and unifying ‘black’ identity that is taken up by young people and contends that, in response to Western racism, multiple forms of ‘blackness’ come to proliferate. Throughout this thesis I argue that ‘black’ is a misrepresentative descriptor and I only deploy this adjective

violent' and 'criminal' (Andrews, 1996a, p.134), and produce particular types of moral subjects who become disassociated from 'the threatening expressions of black American existence' (p.137). Yet, these common sense understandings of sport and physical activity to be egalitarian and recuperative institutions serves to obscure underlying 'relations of dominance and subordination' that are often structured along the lines of 'race', class, and gender (Birrell, 1989, p.213). In particular, I take up the stance that sport and physical activity serves to promote 'a white cultural model' (Andrews, 1996a, p.137), while disavowing and subjugating the urban racialized 'Other'.

From the perspective that dominant sport and physical activity discourses operate in tandem with broader discourses of 'race', class, and gender to obfuscate social inequalities through the deployment of powerful social configurations, it becomes crucial to develop a richer understanding of how these relations are organized in ways that reflect individuals' specific discursive backgrounds. In so doing, this thesis seeks to trouble the legitimacy and authority of dominant sport and physical activity discourses by providing evidence that young people actually engage with sport and physical activity in much more sophisticated and subtle ways than previously articulated. I seek to establish that young people do not simply ignore the 'benefits' of sport and physical activity. Rather, there is an array of practices contingent upon specific social and cultural conditions that are at work in the ways young people come to exist as particular physically active subjects. To engage with this complexity, I move away from deterministic developmental models of 'youth' and instead conceptualize young people as a 'social and mutable category that continues to have different meanings in different times and places' (Nayak, 2003, p.3). I also seek to trouble the deployment of mainstream multicultural practices whereby 'racial', 'ethnic', and diasporic citizens are treated as embodying 'cultural styles and meanings' which need to be normalized and incorporated into broader neo-liberal Western societies (McCarthy, Giardina,

because individuals are often considered to be 'black' in Western societies because of their skin color. I do, however, use the term white without quote marks to describe a dominant locus of power that is historically and socially associated with practices of subjugating 'black' people.

Harewood, & Park, 2003, p.450). Instead, my analysis centers around the notion that young people now take up unique practices and construct their subjectivities in relation to the processes of globalization, which are understood in this thesis to involve ‘the intensified and accelerated movement of people, images, ideas, technologies, and economic and cultural capital across national boundaries’ (McCarthy et al., 2003, p.454). What is of crucial import here is that ‘globalization comes to represent the crystallization of the entire world into a single space’ (Nayak, 2003, p.4). Because subjectivities and bodies are controlled and constituted by the spaces that surround them, there is a need to empirically understand how young people engage with their local spaces. My thesis explores how these spaces are negotiated in different ways by the young people in my study and crucially works to provide them with pluralized subjectivities, often in relation to their ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and diasporic backgrounds. In particular, I am interested in investigating the impacts of urban neighborhood spaces to discern how young people come to be ‘active agents’ and ‘cultural innovators’ (Nayak, 2003, p.4) of a globalized sport economy and physical culture.

By attempting to provide a complex account of the young people’s engagements with sport, physical activity, and physical culture, I call into question the ‘results’ found in the abundant research studies concerned with increasing young people’s health through sport and physical activity participation (e.g. Collins, Lee, Albright & King, 2004; Pate, Long & Heath, 1994; Romero et al., 2001; Ruadsepp & Viira, 2000; Sallis, Prochaska, Taylor, Hill & Geraci, 1999; Wells, 1996). While most of these studies attempt to provide detailed accounts of young people’s lives, they often ignore the systems of knowledge, beliefs, and practices that work to (re)produce young people’s subjectivities and locate them in particular positions of power. As such, they are unable to garner an understanding of the ‘context, meaning, and construction’ (O’Flynn, 2004, p.4) of health and physical activity and how this comes to effect the lives of young people. Even as many of these health and physical activity studies are aimed at increasing the seemingly deficit physical activity and sport participation of young ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ minorities and women, they fail to capture the crucial ways that these young people come to

engage with dominant cultural beliefs and systems of power. These studies only locate young women and young people from poor, urban, and diasporic, ‘ethnic’, and ‘racial’ backgrounds as being ‘at risk’ and ‘in need’ without revealing the complex and contradictory nature of their sport and physical activity. To more clearly articulate the ways my research engages with young people’s physical activity and sport engagements, I will now specifically highlight several lines of inquiry.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE HEALTHISM DISCOURSE

Body type, citizenship, and moral type have been long linked: ‘beautiful’ and ‘healthy’ cluster to become ‘good’ citizen, while ‘ill’ and ‘ugly’ put one in the citizenship doghouse. (LeBesco, 2004, p.55)

Big, profusely round bodies also provoke racist anxieties in the white modern West because of their imagined resemblance to those of maligned ethnic and racial Others; fatness haunts as the specter of disintegrating physical privilege in this case. (LeBesco, 2004, p.56)

These two quotes suggest that bodies which are defined as ‘big’, ‘ugly’, and ‘fat’ signify moral laxity in Western societies. Crucially, these ‘types’ of bodies have also been encoded as signifying the ‘racial’ ‘Other’ and have thus become even more devalued. As LeBesco (2004) states above, having a body that does not conform to white middle class standards puts one in the ‘citizenship doghouse’ (p.55). Underpinning this belief is the popular notion that health is ‘a super value, a metaphor for all that is good in life’ (Crawford, 1980, p.365), which works in tandem with neo-liberal assumptions that sport and physical activity is part of a moral and productive life. Crawford (1980) coined the term ‘healthism’ to describe the dominant health ideologies which hold individuals responsible for avoiding ‘lazy or poor personal habits’ related to exercise and eating, and for making the choice to take up ‘a more health-promoting life style’ (p.368) in order to attain ‘healthy’ selves and bodies. Those who fail to take up these ‘healthy’ practices are positioned as ‘health risks’, ‘ignorant’, and ‘become near pariahs’

(Crawford, 1980, p.379) – the pursuit of health is thus equated with a moral imperative. Through this conceptualization and promotion of health as a moral responsibility, the negotiation and optimization of ‘health’ has become a primary concern for many people in the West (Howell & Ingham, 2001).

Health ‘experts’ and proponents play a key role in (re)producing this healthism discourse. They argue that individuals can prevent ‘lifestyle diseases’ by avoiding risky lifestyle practices and taking up prescribed ‘healthy’ eating and exercise practices. In the context of an emerging ‘obesity epidemic’ (Gard & Wright, 2001), these ‘health’ practices are also seen as a means of counteracting the affects of overeating, poor eating choices, and sedentary lifestyles. Through the (re)production of this healthism discourse, individuals are increasingly defined as ‘deviant’, ‘lacking’, and as ‘potentially sick’ in their ‘everyday behaviors, attitudes, and feelings’ (Crawford, 1980, p.382). Young women, members of minority ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ groups, and individuals living in low-income urban areas have been especially labeled as ‘deficient’ because they allegedly fail to participate in the right amounts or right types of physical activity (e.g. Crespo, Smit, Andersen, Carter-Pokras & Ainsworth, 2000; Lindquist, Reynolds & Goran, 1999; Sallis, Patterson, Buono, Atkins & Nader, 1988; United States Department of Health & Human Services, 1996; Zakarian, Hovell, Hofstetter, Sallis & Keating, 1994). As a result, these individuals are considered to be ‘health risks’ because of their supposedly problematic engagements with physical activity and health. As O’Flynn (2004) argues, moralistic and individualistic health discourses operate in tandem with broader ‘risk’ discourses ‘to create a context of fear and anxiety’ (p.7) in Western societies. For instance, because of their ‘problematic’ engagements with health and physical activity, Wright, O’Flynn, and Macdonald (2006) argue that many young people come to believe ‘that they never measure up and feel personally responsible for their “inadequacy”’ (p.26).

Because the healthism discourse directly impacts upon young people’s sense of self, there is a need to understand the ways these health ‘truths’ work ‘to shape the desires, actions and beliefs’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.48) of those young people who are

considered to be 'unhealthy'. I am particularly interested in understanding the ways young people come to know themselves through their bodies which are 'positioned as objects of health requiring regulation, discipline, and management' (Fullagar, 2003, p.49). By drawing upon the Foucauldian (1991) concept of 'governmentality', these researchers have argued that the pre-occupation with managing one's health has set up a problematic engagement with the body, particularly for females, since an ideal and attractive body is often one that is considered to be thinned and toned through 'healthy' eating and exercise practices (Bordo, 1989, 2003; Shilling, 2003). Obtaining the ideally 'healthy' female body thus requires self-surveillance, critical evaluation, and investment into disciplinary practices such as dieting and working out. Yet, several critics have argued that trying to maintain this type of 'healthy' feminine body is often unachievable, particularly for young women (Bartky, 1988; Bordo, 2003). Through the (re)production of health discourses, the outcome is that many young women engage with their bodies in ways that are marked by 'dissatisfaction', because the body is 'positioned as the object of a measure of self-loathing' (Fullagar, 2001, p.79). As one young 'black' woman comments in the anthology *Body Outlaws* (Edut, 2003), 'I wasted years believing that my fatness was somehow my fault, feeling like a loser because I couldn't maintain or achieve thinness' (Williams, 2003, p.182). The paradoxical result of dominant health and beauty ideals is that, in the most affluent countries in the world, many young people end up very hungry, skinny, anxious, and sick (Chrysanthou, 2002; White, Young, & Gillett, 1995). This suggests that it is insufficient to assume that individuals can achieve the ideals of health, even if they 'know' what it means to be healthy and have the personal or economic resources to take up 'healthy' practices (Crawford, 1980).

While there is a substantial body of work describing how women's bodies are shaped by health discourses and how this process imbues young women with a sense of self, these analyses have largely ignored the complex ways that young women (and men) engage with 'racial' and 'ethnic' discourses associated with the body to construct their healthy subjectivities. While Crawford (1980) and Edgley and Brissett (1990) have argued that dominant health discourses are

overwhelmingly promoted by members of the middle class and therefore privilege those middle class citizens who have more ‘personal resources for changing life style’ (Crawford, 1980, p.384), I argue that these health discourses also represent and (re)produce *white* middle class values and practices.

To further investigate how dominant health discourses represent ‘a kind of elitist moralizing’ (Crawford, 1980, p.385) that privileges white middle class practices and bodies (Bourdieu, 1984), I draw upon the work of poststructuralists (Fullagar, 2003; Leahy & Harrison, 2004; Lupton, 1997; Nettleton, 1997; O’Flynn, 2004; Rose, 1999; Wright et al., 2006) who have moved away from simply examining the ways ‘truths’ and norms surrounding health have been constituted and seek to provide accounts that emphasize the capacity of young people to take up and deploy health discourses to constitute their own subjectivities. By following the work of these critical health scholars I move away from a discourse deterministic position to demonstrate that young people actively invest themselves in ‘health’ practices to produce their subjectivities. As I describe later in this chapter, my argument is made possible through recourse to Foucault’s (1997a) concept of the ‘technologies of the self’.

To better understand the ways that the young people in my study come to engage with health discourses to constitute their selves requires that I also explore the impacts of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ discourses in their everyday lives. This line of inquiry is useful, for example, to address how dominant health discourses associated with the promotion of ‘thinness’ and prevention of ‘obesity’ intersect with racist conceptions of the undesirable ‘fat black female body’ (Shaw, 2005, p.151), and how individuals encoded as the ‘Other’ might respond to their seemingly deficit health status. Currently, however, research that seeks to investigate the ways individuals from ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ minority backgrounds might negotiate and even contest white middle class constructions of health and beauty is limited to superficial accounts of body dissatisfaction and self-esteem levels within ‘black’/African-American populations (Greenberg & LaPorte, 1996; Harris, 1995; Hesse-Biber, Howling, Leavy & Lovejoy, 2004; Patel, 2001; Powell

& Kahn, 1995). These studies are underpinned by problematic unifying categories such as 'black' and white and fail to incorporate more sophisticated theorizations of the subject involving diaspora and 'hybridity', provided by postcolonial scholars such as Anzaldua (1987), Bhabha (1986, 1994a, 1994b), Gilroy (1993), and Hall (1992, 1996), and, as such, do not capture the complex and subtle ways that individuals engage with health. By turning to these postcolonial theories I demonstrate the complex ways that 'race' and 'ethnicity' discourses intersect with prevailing health discourses and come to impact upon the body and the processes of self-formation.

EXAMINING YOUNG MEN'S SPACES OF 'EMPOWERMENT'

This thesis seeks to provide a sophisticated social and cultural investigation into the study of young people and their sport, health, and physical activity engagements. In order to provide a more 'place-specific analysis of youth identities in changing times' (Nayak, 2003, p.27), I will investigate the ways a group of young people use urban neighborhood spaces to take up a range of sport and physical activity practices to gain a sense of self. Specifically, I will examine how sport and physical activity spaces (particularly basketball and dance) work to bring about certain practices that shape the ways the young people in my study come to know their selves and bodies. To do this, I turn to cultural and human geography, leisure studies, and sport geography literature.

It has been well established in the fields of human and cultural geography that 'spaces' are socially constructed by subjects and their bodies and simultaneously work to provide individuals with the social relations and discursive resources from which they can form various 'racial', classed, and gendered subjectivities (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994, 1998; Soja, 1989). However, as Nayak (2003) argues, 'whilst human geography has been important in developing spatial analyses of social formations, there remains a paucity of detailed ethnographic research that meticulously engages with the socially embedded qualities of lived experience' (p.28-29). This suggests a point of inquiry from which sport, leisure, and physical activity studies utilizing ethnographic or qualitative methods could

provide richly descriptive accounts of young people and their spatial engagements. Yet, while the historical connection between the field of geography and the disciplines of sport, leisure, and physical activity studies has been well documented (Mowl & Towner, 1995), it has been pointed out by Aitchison (1999) and van Ingen (2003) that the latter disciplines have been slow to take up more complex racialized and gendered analyses of space. They suggest that there is a need for further studies to demonstrate the ways sport and physical activity spaces work to provide individuals with classed, gendered, and racialized ways of thinking about their selves and bodies. van Ingen (2003), for instance, calls on researchers to provide more sophisticated interpretations of the ways spaces are 'linked to the social construction of dominant ideologies and to the politics of identity' (p.210), particularly in relation to the intersections of 'race', gender, and sexuality.

The existing body of sport and leisure literature that does take up these points of inquiry has combined postmodern, poststructural, and postcolonial theories to illustrate that discursively constituted subjectivities and bodies are integrally linked to the operation of power relations and social hierarchies in sport and physical activity spaces (Beal, 1996, Beal & Wilson, 2004; Mowl & Towner, 1995; Schact, 1996; Scraton, 1994; Scraton & Watson, 1998; van Ingen, 2003). Within these spaces, positions of power are conferred upon those who embody particular gendered, racialized, or classed subjectivities. It is these individuals who are able to control and segregate these spaces by dictating 'local codes of acceptable behavior' (Mowl & Towner, 1995, p.103) and, in so doing, exclude 'certain social groups from particular spaces and places at particular times' (p.112).

Sport sociologist Becky Beal (1996), for instance, has drawn upon Connell's (1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity to illustrate the ways masculine subjectivities characterized by physical domination and aggression are fluidly constructed and constantly struggled over within physical activity spaces, leading to the creation of social hierarchies. In addition, van Ingen (2003) argues that

hegemonic masculine hierarchies operating in sport spaces most often privilege whiteness and heterosexuality. However, further analyses are necessary to understand the complex ways hegemonic masculine hierarchies are created and sustained by young men who take up ‘multiple masculinities’ (Laberge & Mathieu, 1999) that intertwine with their classed, ‘racial’, and ‘ethnic’ backgrounds. Of particular relevance to this thesis is how these hegemonic masculine hierarchies might be constructed out of discourses surrounding ‘black’ masculinity.

My spatial analysis coheres around ‘black’ masculine subjectivities because sport and physical activity spaces are often constructed by community members, teachers, and coaches to be sites of self-improvement for young ‘black’ men living in impoverished urban locations. This follows the established belief in Western societies that sport and physical activity participation is implicitly connected with the creation and pursuit of personal ‘dreams’. As noted by several scholars, the popular belief in sports to instill an ethic of hard-work and competition amongst the citizenry has reified the belief that sport provides a neutral safe haven for young people and acts as a ‘great social equalizer’ (Coakely, 2001; Jamieson, 2003), providing all young people with increased health and fitness benefits, opportunities for social development (Laker, 2002), and improved life chances. In particular, in poor urban areas sport is considered to be a medium by which young ‘black’ men can become imbued with ‘positive’ life lessons and learn how to make ‘appropriate’ and ethical life choices (see Hellison, 1995; Hellison, Martinek, & Cutforth, 1996; Martinek & Hellison, 1997). This notion of redemption through sport is undoubtedly linked to popular depictions of young urban ‘blacks’ (usually males) to be ‘tough, swaggering, gun-toting Brothers teetering on the edge of gangsterism’ (White & Cones III, 1999, p.72) and thus in dire need of social intervention. Also, this belief follows the establishment of sport in broader society to be ‘an important stage of manhood’ and ‘as an equal opportunity employer for Blacks’ (Birrell, 1989, p.213). In these conditions many young ‘black’ men in poor urban

environments physically and psychically invest themselves in masculine subjectivities that are linked with achieving their often unattainable sport dreams.

My interest lies in troubling this belief in sport and physical activity to be a 'parable of achievement and reward' (Birrell, 1989, p.213) and a 'cure all' in relation to young men from minority ethnic' and 'racial' backgrounds. The deployment of neo-liberal and egalitarian discourses in the realm of urban sport provides several critical lines of inquiry: for instance, what happens to these young men's sense of self and their bodies when they are unable to achieve the ideals of sport? In the case of basketball, a popular inner-city sport that is often used to 'empower' young 'black' men, it is reported that only .018 percent of all high school age males will make it to the National Basketball Association (Edwards, 1983). This means that the overwhelming majority of young 'black' men who take up 'hoop dreams' are destined to fail. This suggests the need for researchers to examine the individual effects of the social processes that (re)produce these 'hoop dreams'. However, the belief in 'sport as a meritocracy' (Birrell, 1989, p.213) is still so prevalent within popular sentiment that alternative inquiries into the meanings and subjectivities associated with sport and physical activity participation remain hidden. To address this gap, my research engages with a growing amount of critical physical activity literature which contends that sport is 'a sexist, racist, and classist institution' (Birrell, 1989, p.213) and argues that sport and physical activity spaces work to (re)produce 'relations of privilege and oppression, and of dominance and subordination structured along gender, race, and class lines' (p.213).

In the context of urban basketball, this perspective suggests that sport and physical activity spaces are not spaces of social equality, but actually work to create and sustain hegemonic masculine hierarchies that exclude young men and women. This approach to examining the spatial processes which constitute discursive identities of young 'black' men affords a particular way of looking at physical activity in ways that complicate existing research that is grounded in a 'sport for all' framework. In the context of an inner-city neighborhood in the United States,

I will investigate how the popular belief in ‘sport dreams’ to empower and civilize individuals is linked with the operation of very powerful (and racist) neo-liberal discourses.

COMPLICATING ‘RACE’ AND GENDER IN YOUNG WOMEN’S DANCE SPACES

I have previously outlined the importance of examining how neo-liberal discourses operating in urban physical activity and sport spaces might work to produce particular ways of being for *young men* from minority ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ backgrounds. To further illustrate that social spaces (re)produce racialized and gendered ‘othering’ processes, I will also focus on the ways the *young women* from these backgrounds might engage with physical activity spaces in complex ways. Often, as Scraton, Caudwell and Holland (2005) argue, analyses of ‘race’ and gender are conducted discretely in separate fields of inquiry. In addition, several researchers (Birrell, 1989; Carrington, 1998, 1999; Carrington & McDonald, 2001; Scraton et al., 2005) argue that analyses of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ within the field of sport studies have focused exclusively on the experiences of ‘black’ male athletes. This points to the ways that existing sport and physical activity literature neglects the experiences and subjectivities of young women from minority ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, or diasporic backgrounds. As a result, Scraton et al. (2005) argue that ‘as yet we have little knowledge about how gender, ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are *interwoven* in the lives of sportswomen’ (p.72, authors’ emphasis).

To set about investigating the complex ways that several young women from diverse cultural backgrounds engage with physical activity I turn to an analysis of the use of dance spaces by the young women in my study. In particular I suggest that normative practices existing in dance spaces work to provide the young women with very specific ways of moving and understanding their bodies. To make this point more evident, I turn to the American movie ‘Center Stage’ (Hytner, 2000). The movie ‘Center Stage’ follows the lives of several young

women who are enrolled in a prestigious American dance company in New York. What becomes evident as the movie progresses is that the various dance spaces (the ballet classroom, salsa club, and urban community dance center) used by the young women each (re)produce a very distinct set of knowledge and practices. The ballet classroom is set up as the most competitive and elite dance space. It is often remarked by the female dancers in the movie that this dance class has the best teachers and that they are fortunate to attend such a prestigious and exclusive program. The ballet teachers emphasize technical perfection and individual discipline – choreographers give short and curt instructions that are expected to be followed with no feedback, dancers are expected to precisely follow prescribed routines, and the young women are pressured to maintain a thin body shape. In contrast, the salsa club is the space where the dancers go to ‘blow off some steam’ (presumably caused by the tensions of the perfectionist ballet dance teachers) and provides a space of relaxation and sensuality, evidenced in the drinking of alcohol and intimate partner dancing. The salsa club thus exists as a space of ‘fun’ in comparison to the more disciplinary ballet dance site. The dancers also attend a dance class in an urban ‘gym’ which involves affectionate touching (dancers walk into the dance space touching, hugging, and kissing each other as they prepare to dance), acceptance of diverse body shapes and sizes (dancers are thin and large, wear both tight and loose fitting clothing), and a range of bodily movement (expressed through the mixing of hip hop and ballet dance styles).

The male and female dancers of the movie ‘Center Stage’ demonstrate how various dance spaces each work to provide individuals with a specific set of ‘normative’ practices associated with the body. The ways these spaces constrain the young women’s bodily movements in distinct ways directly impacts upon their physical activity experiences, which ultimately translates into the ways they come to know themselves as ‘dancers’.

This description of the dance spaces in ‘Center Stage’ is useful because these spaces parallel those existing in the southwest neighborhoods of Springfield⁷. Thus, an analysis of the young women’s dance engagements provides a way of understanding how different urban dance spaces within an inner-city high school, community centers, and nightclubs (re)produce particular discourses that are instrumental to the production of the young women’s subjectivities. This line of inquiry suggests that different dance spaces privilege particular bodies and dance movements and thus serve to (re)produce social hierarchies. Following on, my primary concern is to understand how practices associated with these social hierarchies work to provide the young women with differential ways of governing their selves and their bodies. My analysis engages with a body of dance scholarship which has commented upon the specific ways gendered and raced bodies have been encoded, regulated and constituted by dance spaces (Green, 1999, 2000, 2001) and in broader Western society (Desmond, 1991; Foster, 1998; Thomas, 1996, 2003).

While a key subplot in the movie follows the experiences of a ‘black’/Latina female dancer (‘Eva Rodriguez’) in the overwhelmingly white ‘American Ballet Company’, what is acutely missing from the movie ‘Center Stage’ is a profound engagement with the impacts of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ in the ways the young dancers come to engage with the different dance spaces, even though these spaces powerfully signify ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ discourses (e.g. the ‘Latin’ salsa club, the ‘black’ urban community dance space, and the ‘white’ dance classrooms). In my analysis of the young women’s dance spaces, I seek to provide a sophisticated account of the effects of ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ discourses which are (re)produced in both institutional and ‘informal’ dance spaces. In so doing, I also intend to call into question the established notion of shared ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ identities that are

⁷ Many of the young people in my study would be easily recognized if I used the name of the city where this study occurred. As such, I have changed the name of this city to ‘Springfield’ to keep the young people anonymous. To further ensure that these young people remain anonymous I have also changed the names of city parks, streets, schools, community centers, and dance clubs. In addition, quotes and statistics that are used to describe social-economic conditions will not be referenced because these directly mention the name of the city.

often deployed in sport and physical activity research. As noted by Jamieson (2003) and Scraton et al. (2005), sport scholars still produce categorical analyses of 'racial' and 'ethnic' identity that are grounded in 'oppressor/oppressed' and 'black/white' binaries. Jamieson (2003) suggests that this sport studies scholarship does not capture the lived experiences and multifaceted encounters of individuals 'living at the margins of race, class, gender, and sexuality' (p.3).

Following French theorist Henri Lefebvre (1991) who has argued that it is through the body that 'space is perceived, lived and produced' (p.162), my analysis centers around the complex ways dance space practices and social hierarchies might provide the young women with different ways of becoming *embodied* 'racial' or 'ethnic' subjects. Feminist theorists such as Gayatri M. Spivak (1993) and Lois McNay (1992) argue that women from 'subaltern' or socio-economically marginalized backgrounds come to exist in different positions of power. As such, these women experience 'gendered and racialized social relations' (Scraton et al., 2005, p.75) in complex and contradictory ways from each other. This suggests the need for a gender-focused analysis that takes into account the socio-cultural and historical construction of 'black' women as the racialized 'Other', yet also stresses that these women exist as 'epistemically fractured' and can take up oppositional subject positions and practices from each other (Spivak, 1993).

As well as suggesting that bodies are spatially constituted, van Ingen (2003) argues that social relations within spaces are struggled over and thus serve to (re)produce a plethora of contradictory and even subversive identities: '(s)ocial space is not only where processes of Othering are produced and maintained; social space is also the space of resistance' (p.211). This notion that social spaces are sites of contradictions and resistance invites an investigation into how urban sport and physical activity spaces might also serve as 'counterspaces' (van Ingen, 2003; Soja, 1996) which provide the young people with subjectivities that disrupt racist/imperialist categories of difference. This type of analysis will offer a more complex picture of the young women's engagements with physical activity and

simultaneously provide a more sophisticated theoretical account of the interconnectedness of ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, and gender.

MY PERSONAL INVESTMENTS IN THIS THESIS

Before turning to outline the specific ways I structure my investigation, I want to first explain my own personal motivations and interests in scrutinizing the established beliefs found in most existing sport, physical activity, and health research. This digression follows a reflexive approach to cultural critique that is invoked by Foucault:

It is in fact because I thought I recognized something cracked, dully jarring, or disfunctioning in things I saw, in the institutions with which I dealt, in my relations with others, that I undertook a particular piece of work. (quoted in Rajchman, 1985, p.36)

As stated above, my concerns with sport and physical activity center around the material effects of widely accepted sport, health, and physical activity discourses that exist in the lives of young people. To make these concerns clear, and to demonstrate the ways my own subjectivity is fundamentally linked to resolving these issues, I will now provide a biographical narrative of my own sport and physical activity experiences. Rasmussen (2003) advocates using personal narratives in order to introduce and raise issues around epistemological and methodological choices made in research studies. The deployment of these narratives serves to provide insights into the author’s own relationship to the study and simultaneously contests notions of a unified ‘positionality’ by illustrating the fluid and multiple nature of subjectivity(ies). Throughout an author’s life a plethora of discursive resources are taken up and deployed in various contexts, resulting in an array of ever-shifting personal subjectivities and narratives. From this polyphonic understanding of the self, the author shapes, conducts, interprets, and presents the research study (Scheurich, 1997). A postcolonial perspective suggests that it is important to reveal one’s positionality in order to interrogate the

ways particular viewpoints pre-suppose and (re)produce particular Western intellectual notions of subjectivity, power, and agency (Spivak, 1994).

Like many of the young people who will be introduced in this thesis, I come from an ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ minority American background and have spent countless hours playing both organized and ‘informal’ sport. My mother moved to the United States from South Korea after marrying my father who was stationed in her country during the Vietnam War. My father grew up in Colorado and comes from a *mestizo* background, meaning that he, like many citizens from the southwestern region of the United States, is descended from Mexican, Spanish, Native American, and even European heritages. Both my parents come from what would be considered ‘impoverished’ backgrounds, and we were fortunate that my father’s job with the federal government provided us with a lower-middle class upbringing. Maybe because my parents never had the chance to participate in sport, the children in my family were always encouraged and supported in our physical activity and sporting endeavors.

Looking back, I have been participating in physical activity and sport as long as I can remember. When I was younger it was all about being outside and playing somewhere. Because we had six children in my family (all born within 10 years) my parents had no choice but to give us a long leash. Dad worked as an electrician all day and mom was usually raising one, two, or three younger siblings in any given year. As soon as we were old enough we would be out running around with the neighborhood kids in the streets, our backyard (although mom didn’t like how we wrecked the lawn and her flowers), and in the local park. My younger brothers and sisters even had their own neighborhood club called the ‘Park Posse.’ From my brother Christian:

The Park Posse was about one thing that every kid growing up would want in their everyday lives. It was a group of about twenty kids that, for the most part, got along with each other, played games together, and basically just hung out and had fun with each other, everyday. Every season of the

year brought about a new sport that we would participate in, whether we were actually good at the sport or not.

We organized our own neighborhood sport competitions, we skateboarded, we built forts, and played ‘capture the flag’ on countless nights. Being an Atencio kid meant playing in the house (kicking a ball against the back of the sofa, impromptu basketball games or slam dunk contests in the hallways) or usually outside (mom shooed us outside to play – ‘Don’t make dust! Go to the park!’). So playing in the neighborhood was just what we did, it was a rite of passage, no matter if you were older or younger, boy or girl.

Because I didn’t know any differently I just kept on playing as I got older. This usually meant playing soccer for a high school or college team or, later, for a sport club in ‘exotic’ places like Jakarta, Oslo, or Australia. As a soccer player, I was never physically endowed with strength, power, and speed, so I learned to train my body harder than those around me. I disciplined myself so that I could run for hours at a time. While the masculine hierarchies that I encountered on these teams often privileged the ‘superstar’ athlete who was most physically dominating (skillful, powerful and aggressive), I found that I came to be respected by my peers because of my supreme fitness levels. I was revered by my teammates primarily because of my ability to endure the extreme pain associated with high levels of training. Because I enjoyed this admiration and also felt a sense of ‘pleasure’ in being able to be fitter than everyone else, I broke treadmills at the gym by cranking them up too high and hoisted tons of gym weights. In addition to self-disciplining myself through running, I also came to monitor and regulate my eating practices in order to improve my soccer performance. I bought into the popular assumption that a ‘healthy’, ‘sporty’, or ‘fit’ person was a ‘thin’ person. My desire to invest in ‘thinness’ led me to eat minimally while exercising to the maximum. As such, I have monitored caloric and fat intake and even taken up diets, such as the ‘no carb’ diet. Most of these disciplinary practices were taken up in order to become a ‘better’ and more respected athlete.

This background in sport has provided me with substantial economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) – over the past ten years I have derived an income as an athlete, sport coach, and even as a Nike and Adidas sportswear model. My ‘thin’ and ‘fit’ body and running prowess is still revered by many members in my sporting communities. My presence in sport serves to reify the status quo beliefs that being ‘healthy’, ‘fit’, and engaged in physical activity (as defined by ‘scientific’, performance-based, and instrumentalist discourses) is a ‘good’ thing. Yet, over the past few years I have grown increasingly more self-aware and critical about my particular investments in sport and the relations that I have formed with my body and self. I remember when I traveled around the world I felt surprised by the kinesthetic pleasure that I derived from running through various city streets and parks. This experience of the body was distinctive from the one gained from participating in instrumentalist and disciplinary running that was the norm in soccer training. I was disturbed by the ways I had spent thousands of hours disciplining my body in ways that reflected a psychic desire to construct myself as a sport and fitness machine/object. Without being overly nostalgic, the kinaesthetic pleasures that I gained from playing games in the park as a kid had been replaced through my transformation into a highly-disciplined ‘athlete’ who engaged in severe self-regulatory and objectifying bodily practices. I felt something ‘cracking’ or ‘jarring’ within myself – why was a disciplinary way of engaging the body considered so ‘normal’ and highly-regarded? Even though it was still difficult to conceptualize an alternative relation to my self that would not only involve working on my body as an object of sport and health – perhaps I had too much cultural capital invested in developing and maintaining a ‘thin’ and ‘fit’ body? – I became instilled with a desire to challenge the beliefs, values, and practices that have currency in the sport, physical activity, and health nexus. ‘Just Do It’ was not doing it for me anymore and I needed to question popular assumptions about participating in sport and physical activity and develop new ways of thinking. It was from this perspective that I came to enroll as a doctoral student at the University of Wollongong and developed this thesis.

Following Wright (1998), I have provided this recollection of my experiences in sport, physical activity, and health to provide a context to my own positioning which inevitably shapes this thesis. In so doing, I make it very clear that I came into this thesis with the intention of being more self-aware of my own subjective investments in sport, physical activity, and health, and seek to reflect upon and review my own practices and what they (re)produce. At the same time, I am interested in examining the sets of discursive practices that work to provide the young people with specific meanings around health, physical activity, and their bodies. Because these practices crucially shape our sense of self and constitute the cultures that we live in, reflecting upon and even disrupting them is vitally important. It is from this ‘biased’ stance and desire to be an agent of change that I came to develop this thesis.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

At this point I turn to a brief discussion of the theoretical strategies that will be used to conduct this thesis. The majority of physical activity, sport, and health studies utilize fixed and oppositional categories that restrict the inquiry into the nuances of ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and gender identities (Scruton et al., 2005). In order to highlight the complex relationship between the young people and their social world, I will turn to both poststructural and postcolonial theories of the self. As such, throughout this thesis I will make clear my concerns with literature that conceives of a unified self that is constructed through physical activity and sport participation. This follows a poststructural line of analysis whereby it is understood that ‘the mechanisms of truth, power and the self actually bring about the creation of the subject... Therefore, it is through the consideration of truth, power and the self that we can come to grasp how it is that the subject and its multiplicity of subjectivities are formulated’ (Harwood, 2000, p.187).

To engage with the complexity of the young people’s subjectivities, this thesis follows a line of inquiry based on an understanding of discourses to be sets of truths and practices which are (re)produced through power relations (Foucault, 1973). Discourses and power relations are productive – discourses work as

systems of beliefs and values and come to (re)produce specific social practices and relations. In this way, discourses work to provide individuals with particular ways of knowing, speaking, and acting in the world. This concept of discourse contests the belief in a rational autonomous ‘self’ and raises questions about how ‘subjects’ are constituted by discursive relations in different social and cultural contexts (Wright, 2006).

From this view of discourse, power, and the subject, the prevailing sets of ‘truths’ associated with sport, physical activity, and health operate through power relations and work to provide individuals with ‘acceptable’ subjectivities and pathways from which to constitute themselves as ‘normal’ subjects. These discourses work to preclude individuals from experiencing any uncertainties or contradictions in the project of being physically active and healthy subjects. However, by taking up Foucault’s (1997a) concept of ‘technologies of the self’, I move beyond a discourse deterministic approach and illustrate the ways the young people in my study are able to make decisions and investments in relation to the dominant sport, health, and physical activity discourses around them. In this way, the young people are understood as investing in particular psychic practices to become ‘ethical’ or ‘cultivated’ subjects – as such, I argue that they actively take part in the processes of self-formation. At the same time, however, I contend that the unintentional or self-aware desire for bodily pleasure or emotional satisfaction plays a crucial role in how they become subjects. By engaging with these perspectives, this thesis demonstrates the crucial ways that *both* practices of ‘flesh and blood bodies’ (Light & Kirk, 2000, p.163) *and* desires to become an ‘ethical’ subject work to constitute the self.

It has been noted that young people now live in a complex postmodern world with increasingly hybridized populations that fluidly move across physical, psychic, and cultural boundaries or ‘borders’ (Anzaldúa, 1987; Giardina, 2003; Lugones, 1992, 1994; McCarthy et al., 2003). In order to investigate the specific socio-cultural conditions and constraints which enables young people to take up ‘hybridized’ identities I draw from postcolonial theory (e.g. Bhabha, 1994a,

1994b, Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1992, 1996; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1993, 1994). This theoretical approach provides entry points from which to understand how the young people in my study use resources from particular 'racial', 'ethnic', or cultural backgrounds in 'hybrid' and fluid ways to constitute themselves as physically active and healthy subjects. Through this analysis, I also seek to problematize and illustrate the complexity of using binary 'racial' and 'ethnic' identifiers such as 'black' and white. By analyzing the interviews of several young people from 'racial' minority, 'ethnic' American, and non-Western immigrant backgrounds, my intention is to provide evidence that the young people construct their sense of self by taking up different positions of power and multiple shifting subjectivities.

While I do not want to only privilege the experiences of the African-American and 'black' young men and women in this study, their interview texts most crucially illustrate the complex social processes by which 'racial', 'ethnic', and diasporic subjectivities are constituted. From this perspective, and because the majority of the young people in my study identified themselves as 'black', 'mixed black', Haitian, or African-American, most of the analyses conducted in this thesis will focus on experiences of 'blackness'. Following Scraton et al. (2005), I engage with terms such as 'black' and white throughout this thesis not to continue the 'othering' process or to essentialize the young people's experiences, but to reveal the various (often politicized) appropriations of these identity categories. In so doing, I seek to trouble the ways these categories are deployed by young people, communities, and researchers.

By deploying poststructural and postcolonial theory I will provide a critical framework from which to engage with the complex ways the young people come to exist as physically active and healthy subjects. I seek to use theoretical resources in order to offer an alternative critical practice of understanding subjectivity in ways that seeks to acknowledge the multiplicity of the young people's selves, lives, and their bodies. The critical work around the 'self' that this theoretical investigation achieves lies in how it engages with the

contradictions and even uncertainties of the young people's lives, and avoids recourse to a unifying and fixed notion of the self.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In response to the issues raised throughout this chapter, I have created a primary research question that will be addressed over the course of this thesis:

What is the place and meaning of sport, physical activity, and health in the lives of a group of young people from diverse 'racial', 'ethnic', classed, and gendered backgrounds living in an urban neighborhood?

Investigating this question requires that I also interrogate the following subset of questions:

- 1) How do these young people engage with prevailing 'health' discourses in order to construct their subjectivities and relate to their bodies?
- 2) How do the young people engage with spatial processes that are linked with dominant notions of the racialized urban 'Other' in order to become discursively constituted subjects?
- 3) Through what discursive processes do the young people come to exist in particular locations of power and also create and maintain social hierarchies in their physical activity spaces?

In order to attend to these crucial questions I located my research in several adjacent urban neighborhoods in the United States with a large diasporic, 'ethnic' and 'racial' minority population that has been historically subjected to oppressive social policies and practices. In this location, a group of 16 young people were recruited in community centers, school-based environments, and informal settings such as restaurants and parks. Borne out my dissatisfaction with the ways young people's lives have been previously researched, this study pulled together several qualitative methods such as open-ended interviewing, observation, and spatial mapping in innovative ways. Another influential aspect of data generation was

my decision to reside in the research location. To analyze the generated data I drew from poststructural and postcolonial theories and developed several questions that would allow me to interrogate the discursive processes by which the young people come to exist as physically active and healthy subjects.

STRUCTURING AND PRESENTING THE THESIS

While this thesis is organized in a ‘traditional’ format with sequentially organized chapters it is intended that multiple stories of the young people’s lives can emerge in ways that resist one fixed or linear ‘reading’. After all, this thesis was not constructed in a linear fashion: new theories and methods were constantly being reviewed and integrated into the study. Literature was constantly revised and used to inform the research process. My analytical focus shifted and changed several times. Data was generated even as some results were being written up. It follows that the chapters in this thesis are organized to present several stories from the research process in the context of a larger ‘experiential story’ (Tsang, 2000, p.50). In keeping with a poststructural positioning whereby ‘truths’ are contingently constructed and subject to re-alteration and multiple interpretation, there is no best way to present this study nor is there one ‘true’ way to read it.

To outline the ways certain theoretical decisions were made, I turn in Chapter Two to a description of how a nexus of poststructural, postcolonial, and feminist theories were used to address the key research issues raised in this chapter. As such, these theoretical perspectives were used to examine the young people’s engagements with their social worlds and the ways they constitute themselves as physically active subjects. To do this I address topics related to the self such as culture, subjectivity, embodiment, and resistance. Particular attention is paid to the issues of how social mechanisms and cultural discourses are linked to the construction of essentialist and ‘hybrid’ subjectivities.

Chapter Three opens with a description of particular methodological choices made to satisfy the theoretical underpinnings of this study. I then outline the selection of a research location and the recruitment of a cohort. This chapter then explains why an interpretive methodology required that I select certain qualitative methods to generate data. This is followed by a discussion of how poststructural and postcolonial theories were used to contextualize and interpret the generated data in ways that simultaneously resonate with and diverge from traditional ethnography.

Chapter Four provides evidence of the ways the young people adopted and contested particular eating and exercise practices in order to become healthy subjects. This chapter investigates the operation of dominant health discourses which have targeted young people from marginalized socio-cultural groups as being health risks. These discourses provided a set of very specific imperatives related to health, fitness, and exercise that were negotiated by these young people. By drawing upon Foucault's (1997a) 'technologies of the self', I also interrogate the ways the young people constitute their 'healthy' subjectivities by engaging with these discourses that intersect with broader cultural discourses of 'race', gender, and class. I also explore the possibilities that some of the young people come to govern themselves by taking up practices of pleasure.

Chapter Five explores the complex socio-cultural processes which the young people engaged in their institutional and 'informal' physical activity spaces. This involves outlining the ways basketball spaces work to (re)produce social inequalities whereby many of the young men and women were excluded or constrained from participating. In particular, these spaces were directly implicated in (re)producing 'black' masculine hierarchies based around the gendered and 'racial' power. These hierarchies were often created and maintained in relation to prevalent urban sport discourses which consider basketball to be a panacea for racialized urban young men.

In Chapter Six I draw from a growing body of dance scholarship that has investigated 'the problematic of the body in connection with issues involving

representation and difference' (Thomas, 2003, p.2) to analyze how dance spaces (re)produce dominant discourses surrounding the 'black' female body. These discourses often served to create and maintain body hierarchies where certain body movements, sizes and shapes were considered more desirable and capable. The body hierarchies worked in tandem with racist beliefs surrounding the supposed 'primitiveness', 'sloppiness', and 'hyper-sexuality' of 'black' female dancers and their bodies, and served to privilege affluent Anglo-centric ideals of physicality and beauty. As such this chapter explores how several African-American and Haitian young women responded to their devalued positioning in ways related to their specific cultural backgrounds. They used a range of different dance spaces and fluidly appropriated and performed both essentialist and 'hybrid' subjectivities.

Chapter Seven describes how this thesis provides several arguments that address the primary research questions. In so doing, I provide a counter-narrative that contests the dominant portrayals of young people in the context of physical activity, health, and sport. I then argue that this thesis challenges and extends existing research by providing an understanding of how a group of physically active young people actively appropriate, subvert, and deploy dominant cultural discourses around them to create complex and multiple ways of being.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL DIRECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

I believe this is one of the most seductive but difficult ideas in the postmodern turn – that the subject itself is a construction, a product of curiosity, imagination, and desire. But therein lies our freedom, the freedom to problematize who we are and then think of who we might become. (St. Pierre, 2004, p.346)

This chapter will be a discussion of the theoretical resources that I used to respond to the primary research questions raised in Chapter One. Macdonald et al. (2002) comment that there are various slippages in and between the definitions, interpretations, and uses of the terms ‘philosophies’, ‘paradigms’, and ‘theoretical frameworks’. The concept of a ‘theoretical perspective’ connotes a specific philosophical approach that explicitly informs the research process and provides a means for understanding the human world. Through the course of this chapter I will describe the relevance of developing and deploying a ‘theoretical perspective’ in this thesis. In the process, I will also describe the tensions and contradictions that may emerge from drawing upon various theories. By the end of this chapter it will be clear that there are several complex issues surrounding the use of a flexible theoretical perspective that brings several theoretical ‘voices’ into conversation with each other.

It has been extensively argued that in postmodern times, young people’s everyday lives are now shaped by ‘enormous advances in technology which have allowed for the rapid processing and transmission of information within and across countries and cultures’ (Wright, 2004a, p.3). In this context ‘truths’ and knowledge are de-centered, and subjectivities can no longer be conceived of as fixed and constant (Wright, 2004a). As such, humanist conceptions of a world

that is fully knowable by a ‘conscious, knowing, unified, rational subject’ (Weedon, 1987, p. 21) have become irrelevant.

From this perspective, it is understood that young people now negotiate the meanings and values associated with sport, health and physical activity in new and diverse ways (Wright, 2004b). Kirk (1997) and Tinning and Fitzclarence (1994), for instance, posit that young people’s engagements with commodified sport, health, and body cultures directly affects their experiences of sport and physical activity. In these conditions the crucial question that must be addressed is: How do the young people become subjects by engaging with sport, physical activity and health discourses which operate in tandem with broader discourses of ‘race’, gender, and class? This question was used to bring together several theoretical resources and serves to guide the structuring of this chapter. In particular, I turn to several ‘post’ theories (postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism) which came into existence in relation to (but are not meant to replace) preceding structuralist, colonialist, and modernist theories. While it has been argued that it is difficult to define these concepts and to distinguish them from each other, these ‘post’ theories all work to critique essentialist notions of the self, disrupt notions of a fixed and knowable reality, and describe how specific relations of power come to determine how meanings are constructed and (re)produced in particular contexts (Wright, 2006). As noted by Wright (2006), while these ‘post’ theoretical perspectives signify a ‘disjunction, a disruption, a critically (sic) engagement with an existing “set of ideas”, or, with postcolonialism, a set of circumstances which have produced a particular set of ideas and social relationships (colonialism)’, these concepts shift and change. They are often reinterpreted, used interchangeably, and deployed differently by social researchers.

Through the development and use of these theoretical perspectives this thesis enters into critical debates around the experiences of young people in physical activity and sport. Following Wright (2006), my concerns lie with illustrating the sets of ‘truths’ associated with sport, physical activity, and health that are

specifically constructed and (re)produced in particular contexts in ways that ‘normalize’ white, middle class, scientific, and patriarchal views.

I have used the concept of ‘postmodernism’ to situate this study within a new *episteme* which challenges Enlightenment metanarratives of truth, meaning, and identity. Modernism/modernity, as both a philosophy and as a historical period after the medieval times, involves the idea that human progress and the advancement of knowledge can be achieved through critical and scientific inquiry (Besley, 2003). This concept of modernism/modernity is understood in relation to universal and unitary theories of the self. As such, modernist understandings of the self support ‘a normative perception of the world, of knowledge, of attitudes and of practices’ (Wright, 1991a, p.26). In contrast, postmodernism signifies ‘a period or *ethos* of “postmodernity”; which is a transformation or a radical shift in the system of values and practices of modernity’ (Besley, 2003, p.160). In the context of globalization and decolonization, postmodernists argue that unitary theories of the self ignore the cultural specificity and differences of individuals and societies. A postmodern critique thus conceptualizes the self as fragmented, multiple, and decentered and involves challenging ‘the ways authorized discourses assert their “truths” by silencing, excluding or subjugating other discourses or knowledges’ (Besley, 2003, p.161).

While postmodernism suggests a critique of ‘normalizing’ discourses and identities, Wright (2006) comments that it is difficult to translate ‘postmodernism’ into a sport and physical activity research agenda because it does not suggest a particular analytical mode of engaging with discursive texts and their meanings. Thus I primarily deploy the concept of ‘postmodernism’ or ‘postmodernity’ to describe an emerging epoch marked by globalized economies, rapid transmission of knowledge, ‘hybrid’ cultures, and shifting and fluid identities (Nayak, 2003; St. Pierre, 2004). Nayak (2003) argues that in the postmodern condition ‘(c)ontemporary societies... are increasingly seen as dispersed, fragmented and intricately diverse in their structure, composition and cultural ties’ (p.31). What is needed is a theoretical framework that can critically analyze the complex and

constructed social practices, knowledge, and subjectivities that exist in the postmodern age.

I turn to poststructuralism for its value as a method of critical inquiry. This position is supported by Wright (2006) who posits that poststructuralism is a valuable theoretical framework that can be used to inform empirical research studies because it provides a more specific analytical approach to interrogating texts. She argues that a crucial aspect of poststructuralist theory involves investigating the ways discourses come to operate in specific social contexts in order to constitute particular social practices, relations, and subjectivities. This notion that discourses work to produce subjects and meanings originated in structuralism. According to Olssen (2003), structuralists challenged a correspondence theory of language by arguing that language could not transparently represent reality or truth. Instead of conceptualizing a one-to-one correspondence between the mind and the world, structuralists believed that ‘the structures of language determine the types of categorizations and distinctions made between objects and value systems’ (p. 190). Thus, linguistic structures exist *a priori* to subjectivity- different experiences, thoughts, perceptions, concepts, and value systems are all mediated and determined by and through the structure of language. From this perspective, the self is a ‘subject’ constituted through its inhabitation of a particular language structure, belief system, and culture which can be studied and understood as a text.

Yet, while structuralism does ask questions about the textual and social constructedness of the self and meaning, this critique is embedded in the belief that there are fundamental linguistic and cultural structures which can be fully known. In contrast, poststructural theory contests the notion that there are universal structures underlying all meanings and subjectivities. As such, a poststructural critique involves paying attention to the diverse and specific historical and social contexts through which subjectivities and meanings are constructed.

From this perspective, I draw upon poststructuralism in order to illustrate how sets of ‘truths’ and power relations come to construct and privilege particular individuals and practices. By outlining and analyzing how discourses serve to ‘normalize’ particular ‘truths’ and practices that have determinable effects on the young people, I also seek to provide alternative ways of conceptualizing the self.

To further add to this understanding of the ways subjects are constituted by social processes, I also underpin this study with postcolonial theories. Postcolonial theorists share a similar concern with poststructuralists around understanding how asymmetrical power relations and discourses serve to render some individuals as subordinate, particularly in the context of colonial and neo-colonial relations (McCarthy et al., 2003). While postcolonial criticisms often resonate with poststructural critiques of the subject, power, and ‘truth’, postcolonial theories provide a more focused analysis of power as a ‘dangerous, determining force that benefits white citizens at the expense of oppressing their black counterparts’ (Nayak, 2003, p.142). This involves describing how colonial discourses grounded in fixed ‘racial’ binaries work through oppressive power relations to become ‘truths’. Carrington (2002), for instance, has noted that colonial discourses about the ‘racial’ ‘Other’ contribute to understandings of ‘blackness’ in the context of contemporary sport:

It is suggested that historical colonial fantasies about the excesses of black sexuality continue to exercise a hegemonic role in the representation of blackness. It is also argued that the black (male) body has come to occupy a central metonymic site through which notions of ‘athleticism’ and ‘animalism’ operate, and that the athletic black body in particular remains deeply inscribed into the psychic imaginary of the West. These tropes of blackness provide the discursive boundaries within which the black subject is still framed. (p.4)

By illuminating colonial and neo-colonial constructions of ‘race’, postcolonial theories are useful to address the effects of Western epistemology and cultural

hegemony in ways that emphasize the multiple and contradictory ways individuals come to exist as 'ethnic', 'racial', and diasporic subjects. In this way, postcolonial theories lends themselves to a critique of colonial discourses whilst simultaneously exploring how subjectivities come to be constituted as decentered, fragmented, and 'hybrid' through the advancement of modes of subjectivity related to 'hybridity', 'diaspora', and 'diasporic subjectivities'. As such, postcolonial theories challenge essentialist and fixed notions of the 'racial' subject. Furthermore, this approach works to disturb established 'racial' polarities between 'black'/white, East/West and colonizer/colonized and provides a way of understanding how the processes of globalization and 'cultural cross-over' (Nayak, 2003, p.121) impact upon young people's lives.

It is a well-rehearsed argument that there are discrepancies and incongruities that exist between the two theoretical traditions of poststructuralism and postcolonialism (see Gandhi, 1998; Gunaratnam, 2003). For instance, Gandhi (1998) argues that the partnership between feminist poststructuralism and postcolonialism has been 'at best, a very volatile and tenuous partnership', particularly in regards to Western feminist attempts to construct, civilize, and 'speak for' the 'Third World Woman' (p.83). In this way postcolonial theorists have called into question the ways predominantly white poststructuralists from dominant positions of power come to represent and construct meanings about those with less power, typically from poor and 'racial' and 'ethnic' minority backgrounds (Bhatia & Ram, 2001).

However, while there are tensions that exist between poststructural and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, they are both useful to investigate the discursive processes by which young people come to constitute themselves as physically active and healthy subjects. While discrepancies and incongruities exist when using both these theoretical traditions, I take up the stance offered by St. Pierre (2004) whereby I am not interested in trying to find the 'true' meanings of these theoretical frameworks. Thus, what is of critical import is to understand the how scholars choose to employ these theories to design, conduct, and analyze

research in the context of young people, sport, physical activity, and health (Wright, 2006). In some instances, both postcolonial and poststructural theories come to overlap and even enhance each other's analytical potential. For instance, leisure studies researcher Cara Aitchison (2000) comments that 'postcolonial feminist theories draw upon and develops many of the tenets of poststructuralist and feminist theory' (p. 137). Dance critic Susan Foster (1998), argues that the crucial task is to 'borrow what is useful from first-world, male, poststructuralist theory and at the same time avoid colonization by that theory, thereby preserving an integrity and uniqueness for third-world, feminized dance' (p.23). My own research focuses on understanding how a group of young people constitute themselves as healthy and physically active subjects in relation to intersecting and conflicting discourses of gender, 'race', and class. Often these discourses serve to position young people and their bodies as the racialized and oppressed 'Other' by causally linking their subjectivities to 'innate' characteristics and origins. Thus, what weaves through the following theoretical discussion is a critique of the effects of essentialist categories of difference which serve to position minority 'ethnic' and 'racial' groups as the 'Other'. In order to unsettle the racialized inscriptions that are encoded in the cultures of health, sport and physical activity, this thesis also provides evidence that individuals have the ability to actively engage with discourses and come to 'govern' their relations to their selves and bodies in ways that bring them a sense of power, freedom, and happiness (Foucault, 1997a). Furthermore, by fashioning this understanding of 'governmentality' with postcolonial concepts of cultural 'hybridity' and diaspora (Bhabha, 1994a, 1994b; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1992, 1996;), I provide a more sophisticated analysis of the ways several young people take up diverse subject positions by drawing from their 'racial' and 'ethnic' backgrounds in ways that disrupt contemporary racist discourses.

THE SELF AS CONSTRUCTED BY POWER/KNOWLEDGE RELATIONS

This thesis takes up the stance that the self is constituted through discursive power relations. In *The History of Sexuality (Volume I)* Michel Foucault (1978) describes discourse(s) as being specific ways of thinking and believing which

come to engender particular modes of speaking and acting, and also work to construct and maintain particular social practices. What are of particular interest to this thesis are the ways discourses and knowledge come to be constituted as particular ‘politics of truth’ in specific cultural and historical contexts. Foucault argues that in Western societies, specific discourses – such as the ‘healthism’ discourse described by Crawford (1980) – are produced and circulated in ways that they come to take on a ‘truth-function’. These discourses, which are interconnected with power, work through specific practices and come to be accepted within a larger ‘regime of truth’ and function as ‘truths’. Thus, ‘it is through discursive practices that certain things become “true”’ (Harwood, 2000, p.42). What is of critical import in the context of health and physical activity is to understand how particular individuals come to exist within these ‘regimes of truth’ by engaging with discourses that serve as ‘truths’ and become subjects accordingly. From this perspective, to understand the ways the young people come to be constructed as ‘healthy’ and ‘physically active’ requires an understanding of their relations to the knowledge/power nexus.

To begin this discussion around how the young people in my study come to know themselves by taking up particular subjectivities, I first turn towards an analysis of power. Foucault (1978) argues that ‘truth’ is inherently linked with power relations, which suggests that understanding how certain ‘truths’ come to have currency in Western societies – and provide the young people with particular ways of ‘telling the truth’ about themselves – requires analyzing the specific operations of power. Furthermore, power is relational because it is circulated by individuals, rather than existing in a top-down fashion whereby one group wields power over another:

Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing or exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are also the elements of its

articulation. In other words, individuals are like vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault, 1980, p.98)

Power comes to exist everywhere and is (re)produced in a ‘net-like’ manner through individual interactions. As such, power is only a relation between individuals and comes to shape and delimit possible ways of acting on the self or upon others. Foucault (1983) comments that power is:

a total structure of actions brought to bear on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. (p.220)

In this sense, ‘(p)ower is a set of actions... Power exists only when it is put into action’ (Harwood, 2006, p.64-65). What is also crucial to this understanding of power as a relational act is that individuals are not seen as being at the mercy of a *single* application of power (such as the point when they are constructed as the urban racialized ‘Other’), but rather they are subject to a *field* of power relations. Through the exercise of power in multiple interactions, individuals come to have different possibilities to think, speak, and act depending on their locations in discourse. Foucault uses the term ‘governmentality’ to describe the ways in which individuals come to act upon themselves and others by deploying multiple strategies and tactics in their daily interactions with power (O’Flynn, 2004). From this perspective, power is an action or practice that delimits the ways individuals come to govern themselves and others, which suggests an investigation into the social interactions through which the young people come to be subjected by and exercise power.

What is particularly important to this conceptualization of power as an ‘action’ is how social interactions and practices come to provide the young people in my study with ‘normative’ understandings from which to constitute their

subjectivities and sense of self. Harwood (2006) argues that 'truth technologies are promulgated and imposed via relations of power' (p.102). This means that power functions in ways that provide individuals with particular ways of knowing and 'telling the truth' about themselves. From this conception of power that is integrally linked with knowledge, it becomes possible to understand the relationship between the subject and truth. The power/knowledge nexus becomes a means to investigate the ways in which subjects come to be constituted within specific contexts as 'normal' or as the 'Other'. This is because 'regimes of truth' operating through relations of power come to be institutionalized as 'practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p.49). Certain 'truths' come to have more currency than others in relation to the specific institutional, historical, and social context in which they operate, and subsequently come to govern the way we can speak, think, and come to know ourselves and others. From this perspective, for instance, Harwood and Rasmussen (2004) argue that discourses associated with 'mental conduct disorder' have become so familiar that 'they appear truthful and comfortable' (p.305). The young people diagnosed with 'mental conduct disorder' come to 'tell the truth' about themselves as 'deficit' or 'disordered' in obligation to a particular 'truth' that has currency in mental health institutions and broader Western scientific discourses. This suggests an investigation into the 'multitudinous interactions involved in telling the truth to the young person' (Harwood, 2006, p.102) in order to understand the ways that particular subjectivities come to be constituted as 'disordered' or as the 'Other'. From this position Harwood raises two questions which are of relevance to this thesis: 'how does conduct disorder function as an authoritative knower of young people?' and 'how do young people construct their disorderly subjectivities?' (p.13). Drawing from this line of inquiry, what is of critical import to this thesis is to investigate the ways in which specific health, sport, and physical activity discourses function as authorities of 'truth' in the lives of young people, and provide them with specific ways of constituting their subjectivities. This involves interrogating the sets of discourses which come to regulate and delimit particular modalities of being and thinking, and, through their

linkages with particular power/knowledge relations, come to privilege and devalue particular individuals.

Drawing from this perspective in Chapter Four, I analyze how power/knowledge relations operating through health discourses work to govern the ways the young people come to understand themselves as 'healthy' and 'unhealthy'. In Chapter Five I turn to a discussion around the ways particular 'empowerment through sport' discourses operating in the context of urban basketball serve to imbue the young 'black' men with particular ways of being in relation to their devalued position as the 'deviant' 'black' male 'Other'. In both of these chapters I am primarily concerned with the ways discourses work through power relations in order to (re)produce particular social practices which in turn serve to constitute the young people's subjectivities. By interrogating the sets of truths that serve to construct particular healthy and physically active subjectivities, it is then possible to understand how the young people come to know their selves in particular ways and subsequently speak themselves into being. As I describe in Chapter Three, my analyses come through an investigation of the young people's interview texts, in order to understand the ways in which discourses serve to delimit and 'normalize' the ways in which the young people come to think, act, and speak about the world (Raby, 2002).

THE DISCURSIVE PRODUCTION OF MULTIPLE SUBJECTS AND SUBJECTIVITIES

This thesis seeks to provide analyses which challenge current understandings of what it means to be a 'racial', diasporic, or ethnic minority young person living in a poor urban locality. hooks (1994) argues that to do this involves developing a critical understanding of the politicized processes of 'identity' formation:

Given a pervasive politic of white supremacy which seeks to prevent the formation of radical black subjectivity, we cannot cavalierly dismiss a concern with identity politics. Any critique exploring the radical potential of postmodernism as it relates to racial difference and racial domination

would need to consider the implications of a critique of identity for oppressed groups. (p.423)

The quote above suggests the need to be concerned with ‘identity politics’ because certain groups have been oppressed because of their seemingly fixed ‘black’ identities. Yet, by making the claim for a ‘radical black subjectivity’ whilst also acknowledging ‘racial difference’, hooks’ commentary also highlights the tensions between essentialist notions of identity and poststructural theorizations of a multiply-constituted self. The poststructural conceptualization of the subject and subjectivities challenges essentialist notions of a static and objective ‘black’ self and a unifying ‘black’ experience or ‘aesthetic’ (White & Cones III, 1999) that is often linked with particular authentic cultural or physical attributes.

As suggested earlier, a poststructural perspective provides the understanding that individuals can both be subjected to and become subjects by engaging power/knowledge relations operating through particular discourses. While it has been argued by St. Pierre (2000) that ‘(o)nce a discourse becomes “normal” and “natural,” it is difficult to think and act outside it... other statements and other ways of thinking remain unintelligible, outside the realm of possibility’ (p. 485), Foucault (1978) comments that discourses are linked with competing and shifting power/knowledge relations, and as such, discourses are unstable and can change:

We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (p. 100-101)

The quote above suggests that power is disbursed in society through unstable, shifting and contradictory discourses in everyday interactions. Because power is transmitted and produced by these discourses and is enacted in the social relations

of everyday life, it is possible for individuals to take up various resistant points in relation to the power network at any moment (Foucault, 1978). Put simply, because power is exercised everywhere there are necessarily possibilities for multiple resistances. Unstable and changing power/knowledge relations thus work to produce multiple resistant subjectivities that are likewise considered to be ‘precarious, contradictory and in process’ and ‘constantly reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak’ (Weedon, 1987, p. 33).

The previous discussion suggests that multiple subjectivities are made available to, but also resisted by, subjects in their engagements with discourse. Following Harwood (2006), I come to understand the term ‘subject’ as describing the ‘focus of subjectivisation’, while I consider ‘subjectivity’ to describe one of the many products of the processes of subjectivization. This means that, in relation to ‘truth’ and power, there are multiple forms of subjectivity, such as the racialized urban ‘Other’, that are (re)produced through processes of subjectivization. This distinction between ‘subjects’ and ‘subjectivities’ that are organized within ‘a consciousness of self’ (Foucault, 1996a, p.472) is useful to understand how subjects engage with and appropriate multiple subjectivities. For instance, a young ‘black’ male in my study engages and draws upon both a ‘non-normative’ criminal/gangster ‘black’ male subjectivity and also a ‘natural’ black male athlete subjectivity. O’Flynn (2004) argues that what is of crucial import to this discussion around subjects and subjectivities is to understand how:

positions in discourse are played out and contested in and through the daily interactions and social relations of everyday life – for it can be argued, that it is through practice that an individual’s sense of self, ways of acting, thinking and being are constituted in relation to his/her positioning in multiple and specific discourses. (p.20)

This understanding of subjects and subjectivities that are (re)produced through discourse provides a means of understanding how a group of young people come to take up multiple and nuanced subjectivities in order to exist as particular

subjects. In particular, this thesis investigates the ways particular racialized urban subjects engage with discourses that serve to constitute them as the ‘Other’. A key focus of this analysis is to understand the ways these discourses imbue the young people with particular ways of knowing themselves, from which they come to speak and act as particular gendered and ‘racial’ subjects.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S MULTIPLE AND NUANCED ‘HYBRID’ AND ‘DIASPORIC’ SUBJECTIVITIES

At this point, I have demonstrated how the power/knowledge nexus operating in dominant discourses work to provide individuals with ‘truths’ that are crucially linked to how they constitute their selves. To more explicitly explore how several young people from diverse cultural backgrounds come to engage with multiple and fluid subjectivities, I now turn to a discussion around ‘hybridity’ and ‘diaspora’. In particular, I am concerned with understanding how the young people come to rupture the dominant ‘truths’ that serve to position them as the racialized urban ‘Other’. I now turn to highlight how the racialized or ‘black’ urban ‘Other’ has been socially and historically constructed in the popular imagination. From this analysis I then describe my concerns with popular and scholarly conceptualizations of an ‘authentic’ or ‘essentialist’ ‘racial’ identity. This leads me into a discussion around the multiple and nuanced ‘racial’, diasporic, and ‘ethnic’ subjectivities that the young people take up in order to constitute their selves.

While the poststructural understanding of discursively-constituted subjects and subjectivities is useful to critique humanist perspectives of fixed and knowable identities, this approach has been challenged by postcolonial theorists for providing ‘crippling’ Eurocentric accounts of subjectivity that are ‘culturally myopic’ (Gandhi, 1998, p.73). For instance, it is argued that Western poststructuralists fail to understand the complex processes by which the ‘subaltern’ subject comes to exist in the world. Poststructuralists are also criticized for attempting to ‘speak for’ those living in the ‘Third World’ who do not have the power to speak for themselves (Spivak, 1994). However, rather than to use these critiques of poststructuralism to forge gaps between poststructuralism,

postcolonialism, and even postmodern theories of the subject (see Appiah, 1995; During, 1995), I want to emphasize the similar ways that these theories come to view the subject as multiply constructed through social, historical, and cultural discourses. For instance, postcolonial scholars Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995) argue that postcolonial and poststructural conceptualizations of the discursively-constructed subject of power overlap:

The rejection of the Cartesian individual, the instability of signification, the location of the subject in language or discourse, the dynamic operation of power: all these are familiar poststructuralist concepts emerge in post-colonial thought in different guises which nevertheless confirm the political agency of the colonised subject. (p.117)

From this perspective I turn to investigate how young people encoded as the racialized urban ‘Other’ come to ‘tell the truth’ about themselves in relation to their cultural backgrounds. Thus, I use postcolonial criticisms of ‘Eurocentric’ poststructural theory as a caveat to more closely examine the ways that racialized subjects come to exist in discourse and power in relation to their nuanced and pluralized ‘racial’, ethnic, diasporic, and/or cultural backgrounds.

Drawing from poststructuralist notions of power, postcolonial theorists argue that power manifests itself through and upon individuals as both the application of material force as well as operating as cultural representation or knowledge (Gandhi, 1998). Power in the form of knowledge or cultural representation is particularly seductive because it often works to control the ‘Other’ under the guise of ‘cultural enlightenment and reform’ (p.14). This suggests the need to investigate how the power/knowledge nexus comes to impact upon the ways ‘marginalized’ subjects are constituted and regulated as the ‘Other’. For example, Edward Said describes in his influential work *Orientalism* (1978) how the exoticized discursive construct of the ‘Orient’ was created by the Western imagination. This process of ‘othering’ worked to constitute particular knowledge and cultural representations about (Middle) ‘Eastern’ subjects. Reflexively, the

construction and representation of the 'Other' provided the means for the 'West' to be distinguished and reified as a separate and cohesive entity. What is crucial to this East/West relationship is that the West came to be centered or 'normalized', while the East became the 'Other'. As such, the construction of a divide between 'Western' and 'non-Western' peoples and their cultures has provided a lasting legacy of hierarchical dualisms such as First World/Third World, Self/Other, rational/natural, and civilized/uncivilized. Through the (re)production of these binaries '(t)he colonised was henceforth to be postulated as the inverse or negative image of the coloniser' (Gandhi, 1998, p.15). The naturalization of these binaries has had the effect of creating particular knowledge and power relations that have been used to homogenize and essentialize formerly colonized subjects. Through the privileging of the West, the knowledge and experiences of the colonized have been excluded from historical and social representations of the colonial experience. Gandhi (1998) argues that the end result of colonialism was to systematically 'cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the non-West' (p.16). It follows that the 'othering' relationship has historically been economically, socially, and culturally detrimental for colonized peoples, and continues to adversely effect them today.

In this thesis, I explore the consequences of the colonized/colonizer 'othering' relationship on the ways young people in the contemporary United States come to make sense of their selves. According to hooks (1994), the historical construction of the 'black' 'Other' in the United States was used to justify systemic slavery: the 'black' African was considered to be savage and bestial and in need of civilizing by the white European-American. The resulting knowledge created out of this hierarchical relationship produced racist practices and stereotypes which still operate. Sport sociologist David L. Andrews (1996a) concurs that this 'bipolar distinction' based around the 'truths' of 'phenotypical and sociocultural characteristics' (p.127) created through the colonizer/colonized relationship still exists today. He has argued that during the hegemony of the New Right in the 1990s, the 'racial' climate was marked by white suburban fears around the perceived threat of an encroaching African-American culture. This 'Fear of a

Black Planet', as the hip hop group 'Public Enemy' called it in 1990, came to be represented in the form of 'racial' stereotyping by popular culture:

The intrusive reactionary circuits of mediated popular culture circulated this affective orientation for mass consumption through the promotion of stereotypical and divisive, yet common-sense, embodied articulations of race and 'racial' difference. These mass-mediated discourses signified African American culture as being inherently deviant, unproductive, irresponsible, uncivilized, promiscuous, and in contrast to (and thereby threatening toward) the preferred white norm. (Andrews, 1996a, p. 132)

This problematic construction of urban 'blackness' has held many significant and often detrimental social connotations for African-American people living in poor inner-city areas. For instance, writer Wahneema Lubiano (1997) suggests that '(p)overity has a black face – not in reality, but in the public imagination. Crime has a black face – again, not in reality, but in the public imagination' (p. vii). This discursive construction of a poor and deviant 'black' urban 'Other' has created and sustained a range of 'black' subjectivities, including the 'black' urban basketball player, gang member, welfare mother, and absent inseminating male (Rail & King, 1998).

In response to the ways the contemporary 'black' subject has come to be both socially marginalized and objectified, British sociologist Stuart Hall (1992) points out that the construction of a fixed and unifying 'black' identity and culture has been used as a locus from which to organize an essentialist and resistant cultural consciousness. Rasmussen (2003) describes how essentialist discourses 'tend to establish causal links between identities and a person's social experience or behaviour... In this sense, the search for a self is motivated by the desire to understand one's essence' (p. 87). These 'essences' might be linked to 'the bodies, experiences, practices, and even the thoughts' (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 29) of particular 'racial', ethnic, gendered, and cultural groups. In the context of sport, sociologists White and Cones III (1999), for instance, claim that a 'black

aesthetic' grounded in stylish moves and powerful maneuvers is embodied by 'black' basketball players and has fundamentally changed how the sport is played. They then use this notion of a 'black aesthetic' grounded in essential and natural characteristics to describe the 'poetry' and 'rhythm' of 'Black' or African-American dance:

African American dance has been called the poetry of motion. Rhythmic motion is an integral aspect of the pulse of the Black community. African-American dance is an act of communication. Dancers express joy, exuberance, freedom, and sensuality and spontaneity, qualities that are the essence of African-American dance. (White & Cones III, 1999, p.56)

These examples of 'essentialist' or 'authentic' 'black' characteristics come to be equated with the existence of the 'singular and unifying framework' (Hall, 1995, p.223) of 'blackness' – in other words, there becomes a "'black" way of doing things' (Kelley, 1997a, p.22).

Through recourse to poststructural and postmodern understandings of the self to be multiply constructed through unstable and shifting discourses, Hall (1995) and hooks (1994) suggest that 'blackness' and 'black' identities are socially, historically, and culturally constructed rather than being fixed or unifying. In response to static notions of an essentialist 'black' cultural identity, hooks (1994) takes up the stance that 'essentialist' 'black' identities are the result of racist stereotyping and only serve to obscure multiple ways of being 'black':

We have too long had imposed upon us from both the outside and the inside a narrow, constricting notion of blackness. Postmodern critiques of essentialism which challenge notions of universality and static over-determined identity within mass culture and mass consciousness can open up new possibilities for the construction of self and the assertion of agency... Such a critique allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience. (p.425)

Concurring with this notion of multiple modes of 'blackness', Hall (1995) suggests that poststructural encounters with a 'black' cultural politics has served to undermine the notion of the 'essential' 'black' subject. He comments that:

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experience and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'; that is, the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories. (p.225)

The two quotes above make clear a particular postmodern/poststructural critique that contests the authenticity and authority of a collective 'black' identity that supposedly draws from a shared 'black' 'race' or culture. They suggest the existence of multiple 'black' subjectivities. Several other cultural scholars (Anzaldúa, 1987; Appadurai, 1988; Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Lionnet, 1995; Lugones; 1992, 1994; McCarthy et al., 2001; Rosaldo, 1988) have critiqued the notion that individuals construct their identities in relation to a static and discrete set of knowledge, practices, experiences, and values located within a particular culture. Instead, they view cultures as being contingent, fluid and trans-national and, as such, it is impossible to locate a unifying cultural location or identity. McCarthy et al. (2003), for instance, point out that in the context of hybridized populations and trans-national flows of cultural and economic capital, identities are no longer affiliated with one national or cultural location. From this perspective, Lionnet (1995) argues that subjects move through cultural and physical territories, appropriating various subjectivities and meanings along the way. Thus, from this position, a 'cultural identity' is instead an unstable and pluralized 'production' created by and through a range of intersecting discourses.

As argued previously, a Foucauldian perspective involves understanding the self as constituted by and through the subjectivities made available in particular

discourses. It follows that subjects take up a range of cultural or 'black' subjectivities made available to them through their particular discursive positioning. Taking up this position, this thesis engages with the plural meanings that come to be associated with these subjectivities in order to understand how the young 'black' men and women come to 'tell the truth' about themselves and gain a sense of self in the world. A critique of bounded and static cultures suggests the need to focus on the knowledge and subjectivities produced through the slippages and borders between/in cultures. The important point of analysis is to describe how subjects invest themselves in various cultural meanings and subjectivities on offer to them in their urban neighborhoods in order to constitute their selves.

To further understand how subjects come to engage with a range of cultural subjectivities requires a more specific understanding of the concepts of 'diaspora' and 'hybridity'. Much of the work surrounding these cultural subjectivities has emerged from postcolonial investigations of formerly colonized and immigrant/diasporic peoples (including African-Americans who came to the 'new-world' as explorers⁸ and through slavery, immigrants who moved to the United States, and *mestizaje*⁹ who were colonized by the United States in the 19th century). The concept of 'diaspora' demonstrates that all racialized subjects, such as 'blacks', exist in a state of flux because they are constituted by the conditions of 'cultural hybridity'. For instance, sociologist Paul Gilroy (1993) has argued that 'black' people have been migrating across the Atlantic Ocean for several centuries. As such, 'black' subjectivities have been historically and currently shaped by a diverse range of cultural influences that accompanied these trans-Atlantic movements. Because of the hybrid nature of 'blackness', there can be no recourse to a unifying 'black experience' and 'black' subjectivities must therefore be viewed as existing in a state of flux. Taking up this notion of a 'black'

⁸ From bell hooks (2004): 'When Ivan Van Sertima published his awesome work *They Came before Columbus* telling the world about the Africans who journeyed to this land before the colonizing Spaniards, it should have created an academic revolution... most citizens continue to believe that African-American history began with slavery' (p. 1-2).

⁹ '*Mestizaje*' refers to people from the southwestern United States who have 'mixed' Spanish and Amerindian cultural ancestry.

diaspora, Hall (1990) argues that the diasporic condition 'is defined, not in essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by hybridity' (p.402). From this perspective it follows that 'black' subjects in the West, whether Haitian or African-American, have all been shaped in relation to diaspora and must be understood as culturally 'hybrid'.

This diasporic theme of the 'ambivalent, transitory, culturally contaminated and borderline' individual whom is caught in 'limbo between home and the world' (Gandhi, 1992, p.132) is also evident in *Chicana* queer feminist Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) work around 'borderland' identities. In the context of the United States, Anzaldua describes psychic and corporeal 'borderland' spaces that produce multiple subjectivities that resist their categorization by racist and patriarchal colonizing forces. These subjectivities are constituted by simultaneously engaging with discursive elements from both 'home' and 'dominant' cultures. From Maria Lugones (1992):

Anzaldua's *Borderlands* is a work creating a theoretical space for resistance. Anzaldua focuses on the oppressed subject at the 'moment' of *being* oppressed. Thus she can capture both an everyday history of oppression and an everyday history of resistance. Her culture, though oppressive, also grounds her resistance... There is the self oppressed in and by the traditional Mexican world; the self oppressed in and by the Anglo world' and the self-in-between-the Self – herself in resistance to oppression, the self in germination in the borderlands. (p.31-32, author's emphasis)

This 'borderlands' self is able to contest the boundaries and limits of oppressive conditions by taking up a 'borderlands' identity that moves in/between multiple psychic, material, and cultural spaces, even re-inhabiting those spaces that have been oppressive. Through this description of a *mestizaje* consciousness that is spatially and temporally unbounded, Anzaldua provides a concept of the self which embraces contradiction and ambiguity, transgressing rigid conceptual

boundaries and strategically ‘crosses from one collectivity to the other and decides to stake herself in the border between the two, where she can take a critical stance and take stock of her plural personality’ (Lugones, 1992, p. 34).

Sport sociologist Katherine M. Jamieson (2003) argues that the concept of *mestizaje* consciousness can be used in sport studies to understand how individuals move back and forth ‘between resistance to and alignment with power’ (p.2) by (re)enacting multiple subjectivities. She has drawn upon Anzaldua’s work to describe how Latina softball players inhabit a ‘psychic and corporeal space that reflects mixed identities’ (p.2) whilst resisting fixed and binary subjectivities made available to them in a sport ‘permeated by Whiteness’ (p.4).

In addition to the work of Gilroy (1993) and Hall (1992, 1996), Anzaldua’s (1987) work further suggests that immigrant, ‘racial’, and ‘ethnic’ subjects do not exist within fixed cultures or unifying categories of ‘ethnicity’ or ‘race’, but rather come to fluidly take up a range of subjectivities in order to constitute their ‘diasporic’, ‘hybrid’, and ‘borderland’ selves and subjectivities. By drawing from these postcolonial understandings of the self, I seek to disrupt the usage of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ paradigms in sport and social research. According to Anthias (1998), the concept of the ‘ethnic minority’ is often constructed through the use of questionable ‘racial’ identity categories. Furthermore, the preoccupation with ‘ethnicity’ in social research has resulted in a focus on the processes which work to create and sustain seemingly static and fixed boundaries such as ‘culture’, ‘ethnic group’, and ‘nation’. The result is that scholars using homogenizing concepts of ‘ethnic’ identity have overwhelmingly focused on ‘processes of assimilation, integration and accommodation or ethnic conflict and exclusion’ (p.558) while ignoring processes of transnational migration and ‘diversities within groups in terms of class and gender locations’ (p.559).

Following Anthias (1998) and Anzaldua (1987), I further suggest that the concepts of ‘diaspora’ and ‘diasporic subjectivities’ require closer analytical attention and

critique. While the concept of diaspora addresses the processes of trans-national migration in a way that acknowledges diversity and difference, whilst attempting to eschew ‘ethnic’ and cultural essentialisms, Anthias (1998) argues that the notion of diaspora privileges the notion of ‘origin’ and the sense of a ‘diasporic community’ in the processes of subject-formation. This interpretation of diaspora that focuses on a bounded and static ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora community’ goes against my postcolonial and poststructural inclinations, whereby the subject is constituted in relation to multiple, shifting, and intersecting discourses of ‘race’, ‘ethnecity’, nation, culture, class, and gender. From this perspective I deploy the concept of diaspora in a way that takes into account ‘differentiated and highly diverse forms of transnational movement and settlement’ (Anthias, 1998, p.558) and critiques the notion of bounded and fixed ‘homelands’ and cultures. Out of this analysis I draw upon the concept of ‘diasporic subjectivities’ to understand how the self fluidly inhabits and moves in/between ‘cultural’, ‘community’, and geographic boundaries, and is multiply constituted in relation to intersecting discourses of ‘race’, gender, class, and nation.

As discussed in Chapter Three, these postcolonial understandings of ‘hybrid’ and ‘diasporic’ subjectivities raise critical questions about the prevailing methodological practices of researching young people. An important theoretical consideration was to extensively describe the ways that cultural researchers and ethnographers have been historically privileged as ‘possessors of reason’ who purport to objectively exist ‘outside’ of culture and history¹⁰ (Lugones, 1994). Traditional ethnographic studies have mistakenly presumed the existence of fixed and knowable cultural groups and societies. Critiquing this notion, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990) argues that postmodern cities now exist as ‘ethnoscapes’, whereby individuals move within and amongst different cultures in fluid, contradictory, and changing ways. In so doing, subjects actively appropriate and draw from these cultures in order to engage with their societies. From this

¹⁰ Lugones (1994) does not explicitly use the term ‘ethnographers’ here. However, the terms ‘impartial reasoner’ and ‘lover of purity’ are indicative in this context of cultural researchers and ethnographers.

position, young people come to constitute themselves as pluralized and nuanced subjects by fluidly taking up the meanings and subjectivities in their cultural landscape. By critiquing the notion of fixed and knowable cultures and subjects, I make the case that qualitative methods were useful to investigate the subjectivities engaged by the young people in relation to their ‘hybrid’ cultural backgrounds.

Taken together, the above postcolonial and poststructural scholarship provides compelling evidence that previous boundaries around culture and identity/subjectivity fail to capture the complexities of self-formation in a postmodern world. As such I will draw upon the concepts of ‘diaspora’ and ‘hybridity’ to engage with the ways several young people come to fluidly take up a range of ‘truths’ associated with unstable and shifting ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ subjectivities made available to them in health and physical activity discourses. What is of crucial import to this analysis is the constant work that the young people invest in particular cultural subjectivities in order to become ‘healthy’ and physically active subjects. By exploring the concepts of ‘ethics’ and ‘desire’, I now turn to an investigation into the ways subjects take up particular self-forming practices in relation to the sets of ‘truths’ made available to them through discourse. This mode of analysis is useful to examine how the young people deliberately and unintentionally come to idealize and work towards maintaining specific subject-positions in discourse that are linked with their bodily and ‘ethical’ desires.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ‘ETHICAL’ AND DESIRING SUBJECT

Perhaps I’ve insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself (sic) by means of the technology of self. (Foucault, 1997a, p.225)

At this point I have demonstrated that subjects and subjectivities come to exist in relation to the power/knowledge nexus operating in particular discourses. This

argument was made by drawing upon Foucault's earlier works describing 'the technology of domination and power'. However, it has been argued by sport sociologists Genevieve Rail and Jean Harvey (1995) that sport scholars should focus more attention on Foucault's later works which emphasizes the active role that individuals play in the processes of self-formation:

Foucault's shift has brought new tools with which to theorize sport, notably sport as a space where technologies of the self and processes of subjectification are constantly at play. Foucault's later writings also allow us to consider subjectification as a critical and theoretical project, as a way of engendering distinct positions in theory through various practices of speaking the self. (p.169)

To engage more deeply with the possibilities that subjects can negotiate processes of subjectification and constitute themselves through self-forming practices, I now turn my attention to Foucault's concept of the 'ethical' subject. This approach provides for an understanding of the practices by which young people may actively constitute themselves in relation to discourses around them. Following the previous discussion, of crucial import to this analysis is to demonstrate how young people come to take up and deploy particular cultural discourses in order to construct their 'hybrid' and 'ethnic' subjectivities. While I have argued that young people come to understand themselves in relation to the 'truths' associated with particular subjectivities that serve to position them as the racialized urban 'Other', Foucault's later works suggest the possibilities that young people can also take up multiple and nuanced subjectivities that resist this positioning.

As noted by Harwood (2006), Foucault engaged more explicitly with the concept of a 'hermeneutics of the self' in his last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (1986, 1990). This shift in understanding the practices by which individuals come to exist as subjects was made evident in several seminars and interviews in the early 1980s (1988a, 1988b, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c). In *The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom*, Foucault (1997b) described his conceptual shift

from an understanding of the subject that is the object of discourse towards the notion that subjects can constitute and govern themselves in and through discourse:

I would say that if I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself (sic). They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group. (p.291)

Through this description of the ‘practices of self’, Foucault provides the theoretical means for understanding the subject as actively involved in constituting itself through discourse, rather than simply being ‘acted upon’ (Harwood, 2006). However, Foucault is not suggesting that subjects are free to construct their subjectivities outside of power. Instead, it is only through engaging with relations of power and specific ‘truths’ that subjects might be able to resist their specific discursive positioning and come to constitute themselves in alternative ways. This suggests that while the subject engages in specific practices that might serve to challenge their deficit positioning, these practices of the self are still shaped and determined by the modes of subjectification made available in one’s specific cultural or societal location. For instance, Rasmussen and Harwood (2003) argue that through the ‘interplay’ of ‘truth’ and power relations, certain practices and modes of subjectification come to exist which work to position young people in deficit ways, such as being mentally ‘slow’. It is only by negotiating their particular subjective positioning in discourse that individuals are able to subsequently engage in practices of ‘freedom’ that might bring about their self-transformation.

This understanding of the practices that subjects engage in to ‘transform’ themselves does highlight that ‘subjectivity formation is a constant process of self-redefinition and negotiation. It is a process which is both constantly slippery and open to contestation’ (O’Flynn, 2004, p.24). Furthermore, because subjects

are constituted by *and* within unstable and shifting discourses and power/knowledge relations, subject categories such as ‘slow’, ‘black’, and the ‘Other’ are not fixed and essential. Instead, they are contingently constituted by and constitutive of particular discursive practices of subjectification. In her work around the construction of ‘mentally disordered’ subjectivities, Harwood (2006) argues that:

The subjectivity labeled ‘disorderly child’ does not exist in any unified way. The disorderly subjectivity occurs via certain practices of subjection and practices that function through regimes of truth and relations of power. Significantly, this means that practices of freedom are implicated in the very practices that create disorderly subjectivity. This is possible because the self, or more precisely the relation the self has to the self, is at the heart of the creation of subjectivity. (p.33)

This quote suggests that even as they are constituted by dominant discourses, young people also play a pivotal role in constructing their own subjectivities by taking up specific relations to the self. But what becomes crucial to this understanding of the particular racialized and gendered subjectivities that are constituted by the ‘relation that the self has to the self’ is how the subject chooses to invest in particular self-forming practices. Conceptualizing the work that individuals perform on themselves in order to constitute their subjectivities raises issues around how individuals come to desire to make certain choices and invest themselves in discourse(s). This perspective is necessary in order to consider, for instance, that a young person might choose to invest in certain health or physical activity practices in order to become a particular kind of subject.

Foucault’s later work around the ‘ethical conduct’ or ‘care’ of the self (1986, 1997b) and his concept of the ‘technologies of the self’ (1997a) describes how individuals form particular relationships to their selves, or modes of self-governance, in order to become ‘moral’ subjects. This concept of self-governance conceptualizes how individuals might come to refuse particular ‘normalized’ or

‘othered’ subjectivities by taking up specific ‘technologies of the self’. It is the concept of the ‘technologies of the self’ that is most useful to this thesis because it suggests that individuals have the ‘freedom’ to ‘transform’ themselves in order to become ‘moral’ subjects of their own actions. Foucault (1997a) describes the ‘technologies of the self’ as the psychic practices¹¹ which:

permit individuals to effect, by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (p. 225)

Through this notion of the psychic practices that are consciously taken up and deployed by the self to reach a state of ‘perfection’ and ‘happiness’, it is possible to understand how and why individuals might invest in particular discourses and subjectivities, rather than others. For instance, in Chapter Four I deploy this concept to investigate how the young people come to recognize, reflect on, and make choices around particular health knowledge and practices in order to constitute themselves as ‘healthy’ subjects. What is crucial to my argument is that the young people sometimes take up particular self-forming technologies that are indicative of an ethics of ‘freedom’ in relation to disciplinary practices of power. Foucault (1997b) equates these technologies of ‘freedom’ with an ethical way of governing the self and others. Through recourse to the ancient Greek principles of the ‘care of the self’, he describes how an individual can become an ethical subject of one’s actions by relating to the self as a work of art. Foucault (1997a) describes the ‘care of the self’ as ‘one of the main rules for social and personal conduct and for the art of life’ (p.226). This concept of an aesthetics or ‘arts’ of

¹¹ Foucault (1997b) notes in the opening of his seminar ‘technologies of the self’ that he is concerned with the ‘feelings represented, the thoughts, the desires one might experience, the inclination to seek within the self any hidden feeling, any movement of the soul, any desire disguised under illusory forms’ (p.223). Thus, from this position, my use of the ‘technologies of the self’ involves investigating the psychic practices by which one comes to know oneself and tell the truth about oneself.

existence is linked to a self-aware ‘political relationship between self and self’ (St. Pierre, 2004, p.340) as well as with others. From this understanding of the self as a work of art, Foucault suggests that individuals can invest themselves in alternative modes of self-governance in order to transform themselves into ethical subjects.

This notion of an ‘aesthetics’ or ‘arts’ of existence’ is significant because it provides a means of conceptualizing how the young people in my study can challenge and disrupt the sets of ‘truths’ surrounding their seemingly ‘naturalized’ subjectivities. As argued by Harwood (2000), understanding the processes by which particular subjectivities are ‘made’ through technologies of the self also provides the means to know how they might be ‘unmade’ (p.4).

This perspective around a deliberated upon ethics of self-care is drawn upon in Chapter Four, where I discuss how Sasha, a female dancer, comes to take up an ethical relationship to her self indicative of the ‘care of the self’ that involves conceptualizing alternative self-body relations in the context of the white middle class dance spaces. Through her self-aware and highly-politicized construction of an ethical relationship to her self and others she comes to constitute her self as a ‘hybrid’ subject.

However, while Foucault’s work suggests that individuals can deliberately invest in particular psychic practices in order to transform themselves and become ‘recuperted’ and ‘reconstructed’ ethical subjects (Markula, 2004,), it has been argued by McNay (1992) that this concept fails to take into account ‘how individuals invest in certain discursive positions in a not necessarily conscious or rational way’ (p.80). While Foucault extensively details the socially and historically constructed nature of the desiring subject, McNay (1992) argues that ‘there are nevertheless certain desires and biological phenomena which cannot be overcome or transformed simply through a conscious act of self-stylization’ (p. 80). She turns to Hollway (1984), who describes the unintentional ways that individuals come to take up particular subjectivities. Hollway (1984) posits that

individuals invest their selves in particular positions in discourse in order to be satisfied or feel rewarded, often in relation to the body. This state of satisfaction 'may well be in contradiction to other resultant feelings. It is not necessarily conscious or rational. But there is a reason' (p.238, as cited in McNay, 1992, p.81).

The Foucauldian notion of the 'ethical' self suggests that individuals choose to invest in particular psychic practices made available through discourse in order to transform themselves, and thus provides a means of conceptualizing how the young people in my study might desire to become particular 'healthy' or physically active subjects. I also argue, however, that the work of Hollway (1984) and McNay (1992) provides an additional theoretical lens by which to understand how the young people might unintentionally desire to invest themselves in particular psychic practices and become subjects. While I argue that young people's desires and investments are discursively constituted by specific historical and cultural conditions (Wright, 1991a), I also want to suggest that these desires and subsequent investments are not always intentional, sometimes they are linked with the subject's unintentional desire to satisfy bodily pleasure or with attaining 'psychic and emotional satisfaction' (Weedon, 1987, p.96). These 'unintentional' investments are also crucial to the ways the young people constitute their subjectivities. For instance, in Chapter Six I draw from this understanding of investments to analyze the ways several 'black' young women unintentionally and/or knowingly desire to invest in certain eating and exercise practices to achieve bodily pleasure. While I argue that this bodily pleasure is sometimes socially constituted and indicative of their self-aware resistance towards white middle class health ideals, I also contend that there is a physical aspect of this pleasure that provides the young women with a sense of emotional satisfaction and happiness. These investments play a pivotal role in the ways these young women resist 'normalizing' discourses of health and 'race', and come to take up particular 'black' and 'ethnic' subjectivities.

THEORIZING AROUND EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITY: THE BODY OF THE 'OTHER'

Of course, not fitting literally and otherwise has always been a fact of life for black women, who unfairly or not are regarded as archetypes of the protuberant butt, or at least the spiritual heirs to its African origins. Now, many people will immediately cry that black women have been stereotyped this way, and they'd be right – but I'd add that the stereotype is less concerned with body shape than with the sum total of black female sexuality (read: potency), which, while not nearly as problematic as its male counterpart, still makes a whole lot of America uneasy. (Aubry, 2003, p.23)

In this quote Aubry describes the numerous ways in which 'black' bodies have been constituted by 'othering' discourses in ways that make 'black' women feel as if they do not 'fit in'. The 'black' female is here reduced to a body part that is seemingly natural (the 'African' big butt) that is also considered too sexually potent. At the same time, this dominant Anglo-centric reading of the 'black' body – 'yet another American irresolution about black folks' (p.23) as Aubry laments – also converges with the sexualized stereotypes of 'black' masculinity. Yet, while Aubry's quote illustrates how the 'black' female body is considered to be sexually potent and comes to be seen as 'out of control' and thus becomes a threatening presence to white middle class America, it has been suggested that the 'black' female body has also been encoded as an object of passivity. For instance, it has been suggested that through the discursive constitution of their bodies, women from 'black' or African-American backgrounds come to exist as the 'fat black female' (Shaw, 2005) or as the 'mute' colonized female (Desmond, 1991). These categories of subjectification are considered to be less aggressive or deviant as the 'black' male (body), which has often been associated with an aggressive and violent form of hyper-sexual 'black' masculinity (Cole, 1996; Hokuwhitu, 2003; hooks, 2004; Shilling, 2003; White & Cones III, 1999).

The previous example illustrates that racialized men and women in Western societies are often constituted by and constitute their selves in relation to historical and social 'body' discourses that intersect with broader discourses of 'race', class, gender, and sexuality. As argued by Ashcroft et al. (1995), these racially marginalized subjects thus come to know themselves as the 'Other' in relation to the 'truth' of their bodies:

The difference of the post-colonial subject by which s/he can be 'othered' is felt most directly and immediately in the way in which the superficial differences of the body... are read as indelible signs of the 'natural' inferiority of their possessors. As Fanon noted many years ago, this is the inescapable 'fact' of blackness. (p.321)

From this perspective, 'black' young men and women come to exist as subjects by engaging with the 'fact' that they have been 'othered' by discourses associated with the 'black' body. These discourses serve to position them as inherently 'primitive', 'sexual', and/or 'athletic'. As such, these individuals come to experience 'blackness', 'gender', or sexuality' through their bodies in ways that differ from white middle class subjects who have become 'centered' or 'normalized' through the construction of the 'Other' body. In addition, the differential sets of 'truths' associated with the 'black' male and female body suggests that 'black' young men and women engage with multiple 'Other' subjectivities and come to be constituted in different and contradictory ways to each other.

A poststructural perspective provokes an analysis into the ways bodies and corporeal experiences fundamentally shape the processes by which individuals encoded as the racialized 'Other' come to constitute their subjectivities. To understand how experiences of the body come to impact upon the ways the young people in my study come to invest in certain self-forming practices, I turn to the concept of 'embodied subjectivity'. Writing in the field of physical education, Wright (2006) comments that the term 'embodied subjectivity' has been used to

describe how the body comes to be ‘the object of/subjected to power (biopower)’ and is constituted within and through power relations operating in specific social and cultural contexts (p.26). This account of embodiment draws from Foucault’s (1980) description of how disciplinary power operates at the micro-social level through and upon the body:

But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives (p. 39).

From this perspective, power relations work to instill individuals with particular modes of self-governance and in so doing, produces particular subjects and bodies. In *Discipline and Punish* (1979) Foucault comments that the body is the locus of institutional domination through the operation of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power works in tandem with ‘normalizing’ processes that have currency within particular ‘regimes of truth’ to encourage individuals to self-monitor and regulate their bodies. This concept of the body that is constituted by specific disciplinary practices has been taken up by a range of feminist, physical education, sociology of sport, and health scholars because it affords a particular way of understanding how social practices work to constitute particular embodied subjectivities and desires (Wright, 2006). For instance, poststructuralist feminist Sandra Lee Bartky (1988) has demonstrated that patriarchal disciplinary practices such as dieting and exercise become internalized by women and encourages them to constantly monitor and regulate their bodies. These disciplinary practices are associated with sets of discursive ‘truths’ that describe the ideals of femininity, health, and beauty and serve to produce docile bodies.

In another example, sport sociologist Gwen E. Chapman (1997) demonstrates how female rowers come to participate in dominant ‘technologies of femininity’ by taking up a regimen of disciplinary practices such as controlling food

consumption, over-exercising, and constantly self-monitoring their bodies. These disciplinary practices were seen as a key means of attaining an ideal body that was tanned, thin, and strong in relation to the dominant culturally-defined ideals of femininity, healthy, and beauty. As Chapman concludes, through their attempts to create an idealized physical body, the women became further enmeshed in 'normalizing discourses that limit their vision of who and what they can be' (p.221). This notion of disciplinary practices that produce docile bodies and delimits the ways individuals come to make sense of themselves and their social worlds is discussed in Chapter Five. One of my key interests is to investigate how the ideals of self-responsibility, self-improvement, and individual choice that are associated with the culture of urban basketball are linked to an understanding of the 'criminal' and 'naturally athletic' 'black' male body (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, Hokuwhitu, 2003), and work to imbue within young 'black' men the desire to take up disciplinary practices around the body in order to recuperate themselves. In particular, I explore how the persuasiveness of these neo-liberal 'truths' that are deployed in basketball encourage the young 'black' men to take up disciplinary practices of the body to become 'moral' and productive citizens.

While Foucault's concept of disciplinary power is useful to understand the discursive processes by which subjects come to govern their selves and come to regulate and discipline their bodies in ways that render them docile, Grosz (1994) argues that individuals have the capacity to actively constitute their bodies and subjectivities:

All of us, men as much as women, are caught up in modes self-production and self-observation; these modes may entwine us in various networks of power, but never do they render us merely passive and compliant. They are constitutive of both bodies and subjects. (1994, p.144)

Moreover, she argues that bodies are 'centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency' (p.xi) and come to exist as sites of struggle. This suggests that

there is a plethora of ways that bodies come to be governed by the self, sometimes in ways that contest the ‘normalizing’ processes that produce specific disciplinary practices. From this perspective bodies are not always simply inert objects but can be lived and experienced in ways that resist their discursive encoding as the ‘Other’. This suggests the possibilities that the young people in my study can engage in bodily practices that serve to recoup their positioning as the ‘Other’, instead of simply being subjected to the narrow modes of self-governance provided by disciplinary and ‘normalizing’ discourses. Furthermore, this perspective points to the ways categorizations of the body as ‘gendered’ and ‘racial’ are not ‘real’ or ‘essential’, but are instead discursively constituted. As such, these conceptualizations of the body, and the range of disciplinary practices associated with constituting these bodies and subjectivities, can be resignified through the deployment of specific discursive and bodily practices.

To further explore how the body impacts upon the processes of self-formation, I turn to the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1997, 1999) and her concept of ‘performativity’. Butler suggests that there is no ‘inert’ or originary body that is essentially ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘masculine’, ‘feminine’, ‘black’, or ‘white’, but rather these labels are constituted through performative acts which constitute them as ‘real’ (Harwood & Rasmussen, 2003). She outlines how the repetition of specific social practices serves to constitute and (re)produce particular gendered subjectivities. Notions of ‘gender’ and the gendered body and subject are therefore considered to be unstable because they are only established and maintained through the repetition of performative acts:

If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be not true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or

abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (Butler, 1999, p.180)

This extended quote suggests that, through recourse to a 'sex/gender/sexuality' discursive constellation, bodies come to be 'normalized' and essentialized with particular attributes. The repetition of specific speech and bodily acts aligned with dominant configurations of the 'sex/gender/sexuality' nexus work to instate and naturalize particular 'acceptable' modalities of the 'gendered' body. However, it is only through the repetition of performative acts that particular modalities around the 'gendered' body can be resignified:

In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e., new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible. The injunction *to be* a given gender produces necessary failures, a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are gendered. (Butler, 1999, p.185, author's emphasis)

The above quote indicates that attempts *to be* or *to do* a particular gender inevitably fail because there is no 'authentic' gender that can be performed. Individuals' attempts *to do* gender eventually produce 'dissonant' or 'denaturalized' performances that serve to reveal the artificiality and instability of the category of gender. For instance, Butler argues that the repetition of drag parody provides a 'failed copy' of and mimics the seemingly natural linkages between 'sex/gender/sexuality'. In so doing, the (re)enactment of drag parody

serves to expose the discursive instability of these categories, and suggests that 'gender' is only an act and is not something 'natural'. As such, 'gender' and the gendered body are open to 'splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of "the natural" that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status' (Butler, 1999, p.187). This conceptualization of gender and the gendered body as performatively constituted provides possibilities of understanding how young people might come to deliberately deploy performative acts of the body that work to subvert 'normalizing' processes. In Chapter Six, for example, I draw upon this notion of 'performative resignification' to analyze how the young women might come to disrupt their deficit positioning as the 'black' female 'Other' through specific 'hybrid' or hyperbolic performances of 'race' in their dance spaces. In so doing, I engage with the possibilities that their bodily acts can serve to denaturalize dominant notions of 'race' that have currency in their dance spaces and in Western society.

While Butler argues that the (re)enactment of bodily practices such as drag parody can serve to re-inscribe the normative processes that serve to (re)produce 'naturalized' categories of identity, her notion that gender is only constituted or disrupted through performative 'acts' has been criticized by several scholars for not examining how the physical materiality of the body can also provide resistance to normalizing processes (Foster, 1998; Gard, 2003; Shilling, 2003). They contend that the Butlerian concept of performativity is useful to examine how the body is discursively constituted and for exploring the possibilities that these discursive 'imprints' might be re-inscribed through self-aware parodic or hyperbolic acts. However, these scholars argue that Butler's work provides an 'abstracted' concept of the body that fails to engage with the way gender and 'race' is 'felt', experienced, and learned through the physical materiality of the body. From this position, it is suggested that the body is a simultaneously biological *and* discursive phenomenon that is shaped by, but not irreducible to, dominant social practices. Bodies have certain physical characteristics and desires that also play a fundamental role in how subjects come to understand themselves and also engage the world around them (Shilling, 2003).

What is of critical import to this conceptualization of the discursively *and* materially-constituted body is that it opens up further trajectories for understanding how the subject invests in particular social practices and subjectivities in relation to the body's desire for pleasure. Cultural studies scholar Nikki Sullivan (1997, 1999, 2001), for instance, argues that individuals satisfy their 'irrational' pleasures of the body through practices such as tattooing, sadomasochism, piercing, and scarification. While some of these practices work to problematize 'normalizing' discourses related to the gendered and sexed body, these investments in bodily pleasure were not premeditated or made in a self-reflexive manner. This example highlights a 'different economy of bodies and pleasures' (Sullivan, 2001, p.73) because it makes an important distinction between the 'ethical' practice of pleasure described in Foucault's account of the Greek 'aesthetic of existence', and practices of pleasure that exist outside the realm of 'rational intentionality and self-mastery or management' (p.83). This troubling of pleasure is important because I do not want to devalue or abstract pleasure or other feelings of the body by reducing them to be simply instrumental practices of self-formation. To only conceptualize bodily pleasure as the outcome of self-reflected upon work that is employed to achieve a particular state of being reduces it to a normalizing practice. I want to also explore the inadvertent ways that subjects come to invest in particular discourses and subjectivities in relation to a range of desires associated with their material bodies. While Butler's work around the deployment of parodic and hyperbolic performances of the body is useful to understand how individuals come to constitute their non-ordinary subjectivities and resignify 'naturalized' discourses, I also want to be to be attuned to the ways individuals are imbued with psychic desires that are linked with the achievement of bodily pleasure, and how, in relation to these desires, they deploy bodily practices that can work to disrupt normative discursive categories. Thus, from this position, I have synthesized Butler's concept of performativity with an understanding of the corporeality of the body. For instance, in Chapter Six, I explore how several 'black' young women (re)enact hyperbolic dance performances linked with their desire for bodily pleasure that can both

deliberately and inadvertently serve to recoup their deficit positioning and disrupt naturalized categories of 'race'.

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITIES AND BODIES IN SOCIAL SPACE

In order to more explicitly investigate how the young people in my study come to invest their selves in particular psychic and bodily practices that serve to disrupt dominant normalizing categories, I now turn my attention to an analysis of space. What is critically important to this discussion is how several analytical tools developed in the fields of human and cultural geography provide a sophisticated understanding of how 'othering' discourses work to constitute subjects and bodies in specific urban physical activity spaces.

Henri Lefevre's (1991) concept of 'social space' that constructs and is produced by discourses of 'race', class, and gender has been very influential in the fields of sport sociology and sport geography (see Beal & Wilson, 2004; Fusco, 2003; van Ingen, 2003). In Lefevre's work *The Production of Space* (1991), he outlines three modalities of space related to spatial practices, representations of space, and lived space. Through these three interconnected forms of 'social space', Lefevre provides a conceptualization of space as being socially constructed and constitutive of subjectivities. In so doing, he moves away from the widely accepted notion that space is an abstracted and static object that can be objectively mapped.

Lefevre's notion of spatial practice refers to the different ways that bodies use particular physical spaces. As noted by van Ingen (2003), physical activities such as 'walking or running through the streets, shooting hoops or playing golf are all forms of spatial practice that create social space' (p.203). In another concept of representations of space, Lefevre subsequently moves away from a physical understanding of space by suggesting that subjects come to engage with spaces in their thoughts, memories, and imaginations. These representations of space come to impact upon the ways certain spaces become discursively encoded. The ways in which spaces come to be discursively read consequently affects the types of

power relations and subjectivities that are (re)produced in these spaces. The third and final component in Lefevre's conception of 'social space' involves the lived spaces that merge all three of his spatial modalities related to physical and representational space. Van Ingen (2003) comments that lived spaces are simultaneously the site of oppression *and* oppositional practices:

Lived space is the site of discriminatory practices such as racism, sexism and homophobia and is where marginalization is produced and enforced. Yet, lived space also produces critically important counterspaces that are the spaces for diverse, resistant and oppositional practices. Created by both individuals and collectives, counterspaces are dynamic, counterhegemonic social spaces that enable alternative geographies. (p.204)

An analysis of lived spaces thus involves interrogating how particular power relations come to produce both oppressive *and* oppositional practices and subjectivities.

Taken together, Lefevre's (1991) three modalities of space provide a useful conception of 'social space' that demonstrates how power relations, bodies, and subjectivities are simultaneously constituted by and are constitutive of physical activity spaces. Crucially, it is through the body that spaces are experienced and come to be constructed. This suggests the need to examine how bodies are created by and implicated in the (re)production of particular discursive power relations. By demonstrating that bodies and subjectivities are (re)produced by and are constitutive of dominant power relations operating in specific spaces, Lefevre's analysis of 'social space' provides a mode of inquiry from which to examine how individuals and their bodies (re)produce and naturalize discursive power relations that are organized around 'race', gender, and class. MacLean (2003) further argues that through their spatial encounters, bodies become naturalized and also play a fundamental role in naturalizing the meanings of specific spaces:

As specific bodily practices acquire and develop particular meanings specific to the place in which they occur – in which they take place – a second layer of naturalization is effected. The ‘natural’ body overlays the ‘natural’ place... (p.62)

In this way ‘naturalized’ bodily practices serve to reify the ‘naturalized’ social processes operating specific physical activity spaces. This perspective raises two important questions that will be investigated in Chapters Five and Six: How do certain physical activity spaces come to be ‘naturalized’ through particular bodily practices? How do these bodies come to acquire specific discursive meanings through their engagements with physical activity spaces? The discussion in Chapter Five, for example, addresses these questions by investigating how the ‘black’ male ‘athletic’ body that performs slam dunks and crossover dribbles becomes ‘naturalized’ in park basketball spaces, in relation to the belief that playing basketball is a viable means for young ‘black’ men to escape the poverty and moral depravity of the inner city.

To further investigate the ways that spaces are encoded and organized along the lines of ‘race’ as well as social class, and to make clear how the resulting social hierarchies and practices come to impact upon a group of young people’s subjectivities and bodies, I also turn in Chapter Six to investigate the white middle class culture of institutional dance spaces. This analysis takes place through the use of Lefevre’s concept of ‘social space’ as well as by drawing from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) concepts of ‘social habitus’, ‘physical capital’, and ‘cultural capital’. This inter-related theoretical triage is useful to illustrate how physical activity spaces serve to privilege different forms of ‘physical capital’ and become sites for the acquisition of ‘cultural capital’ through bodily display and movement (Wellard, 2000).

In his conceptualization of the body, Bourdieu (1984) describes how certain bodies become endowed with different forms of ‘physical capital’ in specific

social fields. He suggests that social class determines how individuals form particular orientations to their bodies – individuals from lower, working, and dominant classes come to work on their bodies in ways that afford them with particular modalities of developing and maintaining their bodies, which includes how they walk, speak, and act (Shilling, 2003). In this way, specific kinds of bodies and modes of constructing, maintaining, and presenting these bodies come to be formed in relation to one's social class. What is of critical import to this thesis is that different body types, produced and recognized in relation to their specific class location, are endowed with a form of 'physical capital', which can then be exchanged into variable amounts of power, wealth, status, and symbolic resources ('economic capital' and 'cultural capital'). This process by which 'physical capital' is transformed into 'economic capital' and 'cultural capital' is described in the following quote from Shilling (2003):

Physical capital is most usually converted into economic capital (money, goods and services), cultural capital (for example, education) and social capital (social networks which enable reciprocal calls to be made on the goods and services of its members). (p.111)

Integral to this notion of 'physical capital' that can be variably exchanged into social, cultural, and economic capital is that those individuals considered to be the urban impoverished 'Other' take up a form of physical capital that has a lower exchange value than that which has been developed by those existing in the white middle class. As such, these 'Others' are less able to translate their physical capital into forms of economic, cultural, and social capital. From this position I demonstrate in Chapter Six how certain forms of dance that have been encoded as 'urban', 'lower-class', and 'uncivilized' (e.g. African and hip hop) have a lower exchange value in the elite institutional dance spaces which privilege white middle class bodies and bodily practices. Subsequently, I explore how the bodies of many of the 'black' young women in my study become devalued because of their specific discursive positioning as the urban impoverished 'black' female 'Other'. These young women are unable to access the advanced institutionalized

dance spaces because they have not previously acquired – or are seen as being unable to acquire – certain forms of social or cultural capital that are constituted and desired by the white middle class.

In order to explore how the young people in my study come to inhabit or even contest their social positionings that are based on their devalued bodily capital, I turn to Bourdieu's (1984) concept of the 'habitus'. The habitus is the bodily dispositions that are unconsciously imbued within the individual through one's upbringing. Habitus is located within the body and directly impacts upon the ways individuals walk, talk, eat, and come to engage with the world around them (Bourdieu, 1984). As such, habitus is useful to understand the specific ways that certain social patterns come to emerge and be (re)produced in relation to the body. It has been argued that the concept of habitus is too deterministic because it sediments bodies and subjects within specific material and discursive structures. In response, Hunter (2004) argues that rather than being a 'fixed' phenomenon that provides embodied subjects with predisposed ways of engaging their social worlds, habitus is 'constantly negotiated – that is constructed/ing, reconstructed/ing, and maintained/ing' (p.177). Further advancing the notion that habitus can be both constitutive of and constituted by bodies, Butler (1997) comments that the habitus is a 'citational chain that is lived and believed at the level of the body' (as quoted in Youdell, 2004a, p.205). In this way, the habitus is constituted by and constitutive of repeated performative acts in ways that are seemingly natural. However, as argued previously in this chapter, performatives can 'misfire' and come to mean something else. Thus, Butler's understanding of a performative habitus suggests the possibility that subjects can (re)enact bodily practices that both unintentionally cite *and* intentionally mimic 'naturalized' dispositions of the body (Youdell, 2004a). In Chapter Six I draw upon this theoretical understanding of a 'performative habitus' to explore how a female dancer is simultaneously able to (re)enact 'naturalized' bodily dispositions that are linked to her specific lower-class and racialized bodily habitus, whilst also (re)enacting a hyperbolic performance that serves to disrupt the 'naturalness' of her positioning as the racialized urban female 'Other'.

I have maintained throughout this section that the concept of ‘embodied subjectivities’ identifies how subjects play an active role in constituting their selves and forming particular relations to their bodies. From this perspective, young people are not simply ‘passive’ or determined receptors of culture. This understanding of the generative subject-body dovetails with Lefevre’s (1991) understanding of spaces that are constituted by and serve to (re)produce both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power relations. These concepts usefully demonstrate that the dominant discursive meanings and social practices of a particular space are negotiated and struggled over by subjects, often through their bodies. This suggests the possibilities that individuals can engage in particular psychic and bodily practices that serve to disrupt dominant power relations and their discursive positioning as the racialized urban ‘Other’. For instance, in Chapter Six I explore how some of the young women deploy performative acts of the body that recoup their deficit positioning as the ‘passive’ or ‘hyper-sexual’, ‘black’ female ‘Other’. Another point of analysis in Chapter Six suggests that the other young women encoded as the ‘fat’ black female ‘Other’ can re-inscribe this ‘naturalized’ positioning through their highly-emotive dance performances.

CONCLUSIONS

Building on the concept that subjectivity is constituted through discourse, I argue that the young people’s sport and physical activity involvements are significantly shaped by discursive phenomena unique to postmodernity. In postmodern and post-industrial conditions, young people now engage in physical activity whilst simultaneously negotiating transnational and commodified sport cultures (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Cole, 1996; Kirk, 1999; Rail, 1998; Silk & Andrews, 2001). Through their engagements with these shifting and fragmented cultures, young people daily confront and invest in a range of discourses which provide them with the means to maintain, represent, and regulate their bodies through physical activity, health, and exercise practices. In so doing, young people come to constitute their subjectivities as multiple, hybrid, and fluid.

While postmodernism usefully describes the conditions by which the subject is understood as ‘shifting and multiply organized across variable axes of difference’ (Rail, 1998, p. xv), as a theoretical concept it does not easily translate into an analytical approach to working with empirical data (Wright, 2006). Weedon (1999) posits that poststructuralist theory informed by a postmodern politics or ‘impulse’ is most useful to examine how individuals constitute themselves in relation to broader discourses of gender, ‘race’, and class. This study thus employs poststructuralist theories in order to illustrate how several young people come to know themselves as particular subjects in the world. Implicit to this investigation is a postcolonial critique of how particular cultures and subjects have been constructed as the ‘center’ while peripheral cultures, their inhabitants, and their bodies have been subordinated as the ‘Other’ (Kumar, 2000). In this context, culture cannot be considered as a bounded unit of discrete and fixed cultural identities and meanings. Instead, cultures are ‘hybrid’, providing individuals with ever-changing definitions of gender, class, ‘race’ and ethnicity and a contested range of ‘normal’, ‘authentic’ and transgressive practices and subjectivities.

This thesis engages with Foucault’s later work to address the ways in which individuals differentially located within a ‘web of social practices, discourses, and subjectivity’ (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984, p.117) can make choices and investments to constitute themselves in more advantageous ways. Furthermore, I provide another reading of the self that suggests that subjects come to invest in certain discursive practices and subjectivities in relation to the desire for bodily pleasure and emotional satisfaction. In this way my thesis is attuned to the variety of responses made by individuals to challenge specific exercises of power/knowledge systems, and makes certain claims about how particular cultural and material conditions work to produce a range of possible subjectivities. To specifically engage with the complex discursive processes by which a group of young people come to exist as subjects I devised an empirical study that employed several qualitative methods of data collection. In Chapter Three I outline the specific methodological decisions and practices that were used to satisfy my theoretical inclinations described in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I recount the practical steps and decisions made to investigate my research questions in order to satisfy a poststructural and postcolonial theoretical perspective. By teasing out these theoretical approaches in the previous chapter, I was able to demonstrate the usefulness of this particular analytical framework in order to investigate young people's physical activity and health engagements. Following Israel (1992), my theoretical position required that I develop a research methodology that engaged with several philosophical and epistemological issues of conducting social research. From this perspective I consider that the 'methodology' of this thesis was constructed and revised in order to simultaneously guide the direction of the research study *and* to provide a critique of existing ethnographic and social research methodologies. This methodology provided the impetus to use qualitative methods to generate and analyze data. In this way I make a distinction between the methodology and the methods employed in this thesis study.

I have structured this chapter in ways that illustrate how postcolonial and poststructural theories, which emphasize the notion of subjectivity as multiply constituted by shifting discourses of power, suggested that I engage in interpretive inquiry. Broadly, poststructural theory argues that social discourses working through particular power configurations provide young people with specific meanings that shape how they can think and act. Postcolonial theory provided analytical tools to approach the generated data in ways emphasizing culture, immigration, 'race' and 'ethnicity'. Both of these theories imparted particular ways of engaging in interpretive inquiry in order to understand the diverse and contradictory processes of self-formation of a group of young people, rather than locating my research in the positivist paradigm. In the following quote Bassey

(1992) comments on the distinction between these positivist and interpretivist research paradigms:

Researchers working within the positivist paradigm see reality as separate from themselves and expect investigators to have the same perceptions of shared phenomena and thus common understandings. Researchers working within the interpretivist paradigm see reality as a social construct and so do not necessarily expect other investigators to have the same perceptions or understandings of shared phenomena. (p.4)

Locating my research methodology in the interpretivist paradigm required that I reflect upon my place as a researcher in the study context, acknowledge that spaces exist between theoretical suppositions and lived experience, and implement qualitative methods that would generate data, and analyze the data for multiple ‘truths’.

While I used certain methods of traditional ethnographic research (e.g. interviewing, observations, and living in the research area), I also draw from the theoretical work of Gunaratnam (2003), Kelley (1997a), Rasmussen (2003), and Scheurich (1997) to critique the ethnographic research approach. Namely, I argue that this form of research often works to stereotype and exoticize individuals living in poor urban areas. By locating and (mis)representing certain urban or ‘ghetto’ cultures, ethnographic researchers engage in a form of ‘truth telling’ that is problematic from an interpretive perspective that is underpinned by poststructural and postcolonial theories. In particular, I argue that traditional ethnographic research approaches assume the existence of ‘naturalized’ binaries such as male/female, White/Other, and oppressor/oppressed and (re)produce these categories of difference with detrimental ‘emotional, material and embodied consequences’ (Gunaratnam, 2003, p.7) for individuals and groups living in low-income urban locations.

From a postcolonial perspective it was crucial that I develop a critique of the prevailing ethnographic methodological strategies that have been used to investigate the impacts of ‘racial’, diasporic, and ‘ethnic’ discourses in the lives of young people. My intention was to describe how the young people in my study took up and deployed dominant ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ discourses in relation to their individual social, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. Postcolonial theory is useful for this type of analysis because it imparts particular ways of investigating the multiple and complex effects of the aforementioned discourses in individuals’ lives, whilst also providing a critique of static and essentialist categories of the self. As such, postcolonial theory was used to inform a methodology that could engage with the complex and contradictory ways that subjectivities are multiply-constituted in various social contexts.

I drew from poststructural theories to further advance the claim that individuals come to take up unstable and pluralized subjectivities that are linked to their discursive positioning. From a poststructural perspective, research interactions are sites of shifting power relations and both the researcher and the participant come to take up multiple and contradictory subjectivities. It follows that the interviews and observations cannot tell the ‘truth’ about participants because the subjectivities and meanings derived from the research interactions do not provide ‘accurate’ or ‘authentic’ windows into their lives. From this position, poststructural theories provided a further critique of ethnographic approaches that purport to ‘tell the truth’ about subjects living in urban impoverished locations and underpinned my decision to engage in interpretivist inquiry. This mode of research and critique of ethnographic ‘truth telling’ also required that I explore how my subjectivity was crucial to the ways power relations were (re)produced during the data generating phase. As previously argued in Chapter One, my own autobiographical background directly informed the research design and aims of this thesis, and this undoubtedly shaped the types of questions asked and the power relations that were (re)enacted during the research interactions. In addition, because I moved to the research site during the data collection phase, I also explore in this chapter how my close proximity to the research participants shaped

the researcher/participant relationship. By closely examining the impacts of my subjectivity in the generation of data, I further call into question the notion of ‘unbiased’ research methods, and the belief that researchers can objectively ‘tell the truth’ about young people’s lives. In so doing, I avoid making ‘truth claims’ and instead come to view the interview texts as constituted by discourses and power relations. This does not suggest that it is impossible to generate data through qualitative methods such as interviewing and observing, but rather points to the need to critically re-examine how power relations effect the data generation process and how data is subsequently interpreted and represented (Scheurich, 1997).

RETHINKING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH: GENERATING DATA AND MAKING SENSE OF THE ‘VOICE’ OF THE ‘OTHER’

In the wake of the black power movement, after so many rebels were slaughtered and lost, many of these voices were silenced by a repressive state; others became inarticulate. It has become necessary to find new avenues to transmit the messages of black liberation struggle, new ways to talk about racism and other politics of domination. Radical postmodernist practice, most powerfully conceptualized as a ‘politics of difference’, should incorporate the voices of displaced, marginalized, exploited, and oppressed black people. (hooks, 1994, p.423)

The quote above from the African-American feminist bell hooks is relevant to this methodological discussion because it points out how vital it is for a ‘radical postmodern practice’ to engage with the ‘voices’ of the urban and ‘racial’ poor in order to understand and disrupt their marginalized positioning. Gunaratnam (2003) suggests that the ‘metaphor of voice’ is a prevalent discourse amongst Western and postcolonial researchers trying to ‘recognize’ the misrepresented or ignored subjectivities of individuals from oppressed groups. This understanding of ‘voice’ involves a moral imperative whereby the ‘marginalized’ come to resist their devalued positioning by speaking out and being heard by those in more powerful groups. Yet, what is not clear from this conceptualization of

marginalized ‘voices’ is how they are captured through the use of qualitative methods and how to approach them as analytical texts.

As outlined in Chapter Two, I draw from poststructuralists such as Foucault and Butler to argue that young people speak themselves into existence as particular kinds of subjects. As such, young people’s ‘talk’ can also come to be understood as ‘texts’ that provide windows into the ways they engage with discourses and constitute their subjectivities. However, while this poststructural perspective provides a useful entry point from which to investigate the discursive resources that young people use to engage with physical activity and constitute themselves as physically active and healthy subjects as evidenced by their ‘voices’, it is argued by Wright (2006) that poststructuralism is a theoretical perspective that does not imply the use of specific methodological practices. Connell (2004) concurs and adds that while ‘post-structuralism represents an important creative resource for the social sciences and humanities’ (p.22), there are many uncertainties surrounding *how* to use poststructuralism in empirical research.

While questions remain over the use of poststructuralism in the methodological process, Macdonald et al. (2002) advance the notion that interpretive research underpinned by poststructuralism usually involves the use of qualitative methods. Poststructural researchers have adopted qualitative methods and ‘tend to use interviews, observations, collect documentation, and take field notes’ (p. 143) in order to understand the discursive engagements of individuals and their gendered and racialized subjectivity constitution. Following on, this thesis primarily implemented semi-structured and open-ended interviewing to generate data in order to satisfy the analytical strategy of interrogating the language and practices (re)enacted by young people negotiating their discursive positioning as the racialized urban ‘Other’. In particular, I was curious to find out how and when particular ‘racial’, diasporic, and ‘ethnic’ subjectivities (amongst other gendered, sexual, and classed subjectivities) were claimed or contested by young people in the interview interactions (Gunaratnam, 2003).

Qualitative methods such as interviewing and observations have been extensively used by ethnographic researchers who have attempted to reveal the shared meanings of a cultural group. For instance, Kraack and Kenway (2002) posit in their study of young boys and spaces that using a range of ethnographic methods is a useful way to study the processes of self-formation because it ensures a multi-layered analysis. Furthermore, they argue that using several qualitative methods over time is a useful way to gather multiple viewpoints. This ethnographic approach provided them with several angles of analysis from which to eventually interrogate their generated data.

Yet, while my thesis claims to involve a set of ethnographic methods such as interviewing and observations in order to garner multiple perspectives and to subsequently provide numerous lines of analysis, I argue that great care must be exercised when drawing from and deploying ethnographic approaches in the research process. The poststructural and postcolonial theories that underpin this thesis raise critical questions about the prevailing ethnographic practices of researching individuals living in impoverished urban communities. In particular, I have concerns about the ways ethnographers and social researchers have come to construct these communities as discrete cultural units, and, in attempting to ‘tell the truth’ about these cultures, actually work to ‘other’ them whilst centering and ‘normalizing’ their own subject-positions. This critique of ethnography is supported by Kenway and McLeod (2004), who use poststructural and postcolonial scholarship to disrupt the notion of an ‘objective’ and ‘normal’ researcher. They argue that many times the researcher’s perspectives come to be ‘naturalized’ whilst the voice of the ‘Other’ comes to be systematically silenced or misrepresented.

Several critical questions thus had to be addressed regarding how researchers construct and analyze the meanings of young people’s cultural narratives: How do some groups come to be located as the ‘Other’ that is embedded with a fixed and knowable culture? How is this indicative of power relationships that exist in the research process and how does this influence data generation? Subsequently, in

what ways can the ‘voices’ of the racialized urban ‘Other’ be interpreted and represented? To interrogate these questions I made several intentional methodological choices that were shaped by both poststructural and postcolonial theories. I will outline these methodological decisions below.

Firstly, a crucial methodological consideration was to conduct ethnographic research in an area that was considered to be urban, highly ‘ethnic’, and impoverished. This decision was made to redress the lack of sport studies scholarship that engages with the multiple experiences and subjectivities of individuals from these backgrounds. Since I had previously lived near the southwest section of Springfield for one year, I made a decision to locate my research in this area. I felt that my familiarity with some of the people, sport programs, neighborhoods, streets, and parks in this location would provide me with contacts and information that could help expedite the processes of generating data. For instance, I had previously worked with a man who was now directing one of the neighborhood recreation centers in this area. I thought that I might be able to recruit young people through his center because of our previous work relationship. I also expected that this community center director was constantly interacting with the young people in this area who often ‘dropped in’ to this center to ‘hang out’, play basketball, lift weights, and swim. Furthermore, he was also a former professional basketball agent who had close connections to the local basketball scene – I felt that he would have an ‘insider’s’ understanding of the southwest Springfield basketball landscape. Thus, it was hoped that my personal connections to the research site might provide additional insights that would help me to make sense of the data and facilitate the interpretation of generated data in ways that responded to my research questions.

These previous connections to the research site instilled within me a sense that I was an ‘insider’ who could conduct ethnographic-style research in this area. Yet, I was also very aware that I was an ‘outside’ researcher coming into these neighborhoods. I had never directly lived in these neighborhoods and I had no connections to the predominantly African-American community. I also had a

much more middle-class upbringing than my peers in this area. For instance, I had attended an expensive private college education that would have been out of reach for the overwhelming majority of the young people living in this area that often grew up in poverty.

With this understanding of my ‘outsider-ness’, my intention was also to disrupt the ways that cultural researchers and ethnographers have been historically privileged as ‘possessors of reason’ who purport to objectively exist ‘outside’ of culture and history (Lugones, 1994). Because I was making decisions that were aligned with previous sociological and ethnographic studies whereby the ‘outside’ researcher ‘goes in’ to the research location with pre-determined research agendas, theoretical perspectives, and personal biases, I also wanted to be highly critical and self-reflective of my own involvements in the research processes. I felt that I was balancing a shifting subjectivity comprised of both ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ perspectives and needed a way to make sense of this constant flux. Thus, I came to locate this study within an interpretive paradigm that was informed by poststructuralist and postcolonial notions of multiple and fluid power relationships, subjectivities, and cultures.

From this perspective, I argue that traditional ethnographic studies have mistakenly presumed the existence of fixed and knowable cultural groups and societies. Drawing on my postcolonial perspective I want to rupture the notion that individuals are members of bounded cultures and ‘races’ and have essential or shared characteristics and subjectivities. While traditional ethnographic researchers have assumed the existence of an ‘Other’ individual or cultural group that is knowable through participant observation, this perspective only serves to marginalize these cultures by reducing their ‘members’ to fixed and oppositional objects whilst appropriating their voices. According to Lugones (1994) ethnographic researchers have marked or inscribed particular groups as being culture-laden because they differ from the homogenized world of the researcher. In this way, ethnographers and social researchers have labeled and represented impoverished urban cultures as the ‘Other’. Furthermore, Kelley (1997a) and

Wacquant (1993) argue that poor urban neighborhoods with a large population of ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ residents are often stigmatized and that this place identification further works to disadvantage these people because they view themselves as ‘marginalized’. In the following extended quote, Kelley (1997a) describes how ethnographers working in urban areas have presumed the existence of a ‘real’ ‘ghetto’ culture that is comprised of essentialist ‘typologies’ and their ‘authentic’ behaviors. These researchers thus served to exoticize the urban poor in their search for ‘real Negroes’ (p.20), and, in the process, reduced them to ‘racial’ stereotypes:

Of course, there were other characters, like the men and women who went to work every day in foundries, hospitals, nursing homes, private homes, police stations, sanitation departments, banks, garment factories, assembly plants, pawn shops, construction sites, loading docks, storefront churches, telephone companies, grocery and department stores, public transit, restaurants, welfare offices, recreation centers; or the street vendors, the cab drivers, the bus drivers, the ice cream truck drivers, the seamstresses, the numerologists and fortune tellers, the folks who protected or cleaned downtown buildings all night long. These are the kinds of people who lived in my neighborhood in West Harlem during the early 1970s, but they rarely found their way into the ethnographic text. And when they did show up, social scientists tended to reduce them to typologies – ‘lames’, ‘strivers’, ‘mainstreamers’, ‘achievers’, or ‘revolutionaries’¹². (Kelley, 1997a, p.20-21)

This quote illustrates how ethnographic researchers, in their search for an ‘authentic Negro culture’ (p.20) have ‘othered’ those groups and individuals living in ‘ghetto’ areas because of their seemingly ‘natural’ characteristics that are linked to their lower-class and ‘racial’ minority positionings. In an example that engages more closely with the study of urban sport, Cole and King (1998) argue

¹² These identity categories were described in ‘The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art’ (Clifford, 1988, p.246).

that ethnographic representations of inner-city basketball serve to cement young 'black' men into a 'real' 'coming of age' narrative in relation to a fixed and oppositional 'gangs vs. sport' dyad. The examples from Cole and King (1998) and Kelley (1997a) illustrate how 'urban' ethnographic researchers have reduced the lives of those considered to be the racialized urban 'Other' into 'atomized essences of an imagined authenticity' (Nayak, 2003, p.18). I argue that urban ethnographic researchers have consistently failed to engage with the multiple interests, practices, and life experiences of those 'every day' individuals living in low-income urban areas, because they do not fit into the exoticized and essentialized 'typologies' sought after by the 'normal' Western researcher.

By constructing and misrepresenting the racialized urban 'Other', ethnographic researchers have centered and normalized the knowledge and cultures of the West and Western intellectuals. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1998) argues that the process of 'normalization' occurs through a type of 'ventriloquism' whereby ethnographers assume a position of transparency from which they purport to 'objectively' gather the 'voices' of those individuals marked as cultural. Yet these ethnographers are still expected to make interpretations based on their previous intellectual training and often white middle class biases. In this way Appadurai argues that the phenomenon of 'ventriloquism' occurs because cultural informants 'are often made to speak for us' (p.17) as embodied representatives of a generalized culture, even as the ethnographers have concealed the multiple and nuanced 'voices' of these 'cultural' individuals. Furthermore, sociology of sport researchers Mary McDonald and Susan Birrell (1999) posit that by attempting to objectively capture, master, and represent the lived experiences of particular cultural groups, 'ethnographers were producing narratives and accounts of their own experience, and that experience was inevitably White, male, middle class, and Western' (p. 289). In this way the 'authentic' characteristics of a 'marginalized' or 'othered' culture are often projections of the white male researcher.

However, labeling and studying particular individuals because of their perceived ‘marginalized’ and ‘racialized’ status is not a practice that is only endemic to white male researchers. While scholars such as hooks (1994) suggest the need for ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ minority researchers to gather and represent the resistant voices of the racially marginalized in order to resist white oppression, Scheurich (1997) argues that fixing social life within the ‘dominance-resistance binary is but another prison house of language, meaning, and communication’ (p. 72) because it fails to engage with the complex situations and affiliations of many individuals from ‘oppressed’ groups. Because inclusivity within a particular social or cultural group is often contingent, many members of these groups do not fit into the particular ‘marginalized’ categories brought in by the researcher (Rasmussen, 2003). Even as ‘critical’ researchers from ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ minority backgrounds attempt to shift social relations by finding and representing the resistant ‘voices’ of the oppressed, many of these researchers come to misrepresent or ignore completely the lives of the ‘oppressed’ in their zeal to write up redemptive narratives (Gunaratnam, 2003).

The above commentary demonstrates the complex issues surrounding the deployment of an ethnographic approach in the context of my research study. A Foucauldian perspective suggests the importance of closely considering how certain ‘truths’ come to be constructed and (re)produced through multiple systems of knowledge and power relations. As such, ethnographic research must be understood as a practice that produces data, and does not simply collect data (Youdell, 2004a). From this perspective, it was crucial for me to understand how data was generated in relation to the encoding of certain individuals as ‘cultural’ and ‘marginalized’, and to engage with the pivotal role that multiple and shifting power relations play in the researcher-participant interactions. I argue that instead of making ethnographic claims to ‘objectivity’, the existence of power relations in the research interactions required that I continually re-examine how my own ‘biases’ and subjectivities worked to shape the generated data and influenced how data was analyzed for particular meanings.

Rather than searching for the unifying cultural meanings of a fixed and objective racialized 'Other', I also point out the necessity of understanding subjectivity as multiply-constituted through a range of cultural affiliations. In the context of my own research in an urban location, I take up Appadurai's (1990) stance that postmodern cities now exist as 'ethnoscapes', whereby individuals move within and amongst different cultures in fluid, contradictory, and changing ways. In so doing, subjects actively appropriate and draw from these cultures in order to engage with their societies. By fluidly taking up a range of discourses in their cultural landscapes, young people come to constitute themselves as pluralized gendered and racialized subjects. As such, I argue that my thesis presents a number of accounts that are 'contingent upon the fluidity of context, situation and group dynamics' (Nayak, 2003, p.30).

POSTSTRUCTURAL APPROACHES TO GENERATING AND INTERROGATING DATA

The previous discussion describing the complex nature of doing ethnographic cultural research posed several important issues related to researcher reflexivity in the research process. I now use this point of discussion to further critique the notion that generated data 'accurately' and 'authentically' represents young people's subjectivities and experiences. A poststructural position specifically challenges the humanist belief that young people exist as fixed and are knowable through the research process (Henriques et al., 1984). Instead, I argue that my research interactions were inherently power-laden and that both the research participants and I took up shifting and multiple subjectivities in relation to our diverse discursive positionings. Because there is no unified subject, data that is generated through research interactions cannot 'accurately' reveal the 'true' subjectivities and experiences of young people.

Scheurich (1997) argues that '(m)any feminists now name their social positionality, and numerous scholars now name their epistemological orientation' (p.74) in order to demonstrate how they are not 'objective' and that generated data does not provide the 'truth' about individual's lives. From this stance, the researcher must closely consider the 'conscious and unconscious baggage' that

shapes the research interactions, and is drawn upon to interpret the interview texts. Some scholars even advocate using a researcher's unique positionality to produce better insights into particular research communities. Frankenburg (1993), for instance, believes that oppressed people working in research studies can provide greater insights into hegemonic practices and structures. Frankenburg thus calls for including 'marginalized' and 'oppressed' individuals in the research process because their experiences provides them with a better understanding of both localized and broader social inequalities. Katherine M. Jamieson (1998), in the context of a study of collegiate Latina softball players, also makes the case that:

those persons who are most marginalized in any society have the potential to offer a more accurate view of the power structures and hierarchies that operate within the social system... There is no one accurate perspective, but there are perspectives that are less partial than those that we have come to accept as the standard in sociological analyses of women's sport. (p. 355).

However, Scheurich (1997) argues that interactions and meanings, amongst participants and between researchers and participants, 'are a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences' (p. 66). Because of the complex and shifting nature of the interviewing process, Scheurich (1997) makes the claim that the meanings derived through research interactions are not 'truthful' but are rather unstable:

Researchers have multiple intentions and desires, some of which are consciously known and some of which are not. The same is true of the interviewee. The language out of which the questions are constructed is not bounded or stable; it is persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time. (p. 62)

While individual interviews are conducted with specific persons located in a unique time and space, interview questions and answers mean different things for both the researcher and the interviewee. The meanings and understandings of the interviews change between different individuals and across different times and locations. Additionally, interviewees are not simply passive during the interviews because they actively participate in the process through overt and subversive practices. In this context it is erroneous to assume that there is one determinable pattern or outcome that can be discovered by the interview process (Scheurich, 1997). Taken together, Scheurich's arguments suggest that the research process involves the changing and fragmenting identities and desires of both the researcher and participants (Kondo, 1990), which contests the notion that the subject-positions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the researcher and participants can be 'matched'.

A 'matching' approach thus serves to reify 'authentic' notions of cultural identity and ignores the ways individuals can take up multiple subjectivities and come to have changing and contradictory perspectives. Furthermore, by focusing on matching the 'marginalized' subjectivities and desires of the researcher and the participants, other power relations and axes of oppression that should also be addressed usually come to be obscured:

interactions and methodological discourses, such as those relating to matching, are constructed in ways that spotlight the determining effects of one (homogenous) category of difference over one another. This can serve to produce and re-produce the apparent dominance – and also manageability – of one category, simultaneously obscuring other forms of difference and power relations. (Gunaratnam, p. 85)

Because matching often involves aligning the researcher and the participants along one mode of domination, such as racism, other forms of oppression (e.g. sexism) are not investigated. Moreover, Rasmussen (2003) also notes that perceived membership within an oppressed community would not even provide

greater clarity in the research process. In the context of homosexuality, '(d)ifferent people, in different locations, and at different historical moments, will have different understandings of heteronormative processes and the ways they circulate, produce and valorize certain knowledges' (p. 60). While she poses that an understanding of individuals' subjectivities and biographies is important to the research process, it is too simple to assume that individuals are representative of a broader community or cultural group. This contrasts the supposition that shared identities and biographies between researcher and participant can provide 'greater clarity of perspective or instantaneous inclusivity' (Rasmussen, 2003, p. 62).

The commentary above provides compelling evidence that 'matching' the 'racial', gendered, classed, and/or sexual identities in the research process assumes the existence of 'neat' and 'hygienic' categories of difference (Gunaratnam, 2003, p.81) which can be co-habitated. While it is important for researchers to name their positionality in order to better understand how they shape the research relationship, the commentary from above suggests that the sharing of particular cultural or geographic backgrounds does not necessarily provide more 'truthful' accounts of individuals' lives. For instance, while living in the research area undoubtedly provided me with more accessibility to meet with the young people in my study, this does not mean that the generated data is somehow more 'contextualized' or provides a more 'truthful' account of their lives. Living in southwest Springfield simply provided me with particular ways of coming to understand the research participants and engaging with them in our research interactions. Over the course of this chapter, I further examine how my subjectivities and close proximity to the research participants came to shape the power relations in our research interactions, and ultimately worked to create the descriptive accounts used in this thesis.

By taking up the poststructuralist claim that the 'self' is multiply-constituted by shifting and unstable discourses, I have further advanced the claim that there are no 'accurate' methods of generating data. Yet, this does not mean that qualitative methods such as interviewing and observations cannot provide useful insights into

young people's lives. Rather, it suggests the need for researchers to constantly interrogate how their intentions and subjectivities come to effect and make choices around the data collection, interpretation, and presentation processes. Furthermore, a poststructural stance points to the shifting and unstable nature of both researcher and participant subjectivities, which are (re)enacted in relation to specific interview contexts and the power relations that exist in those interactions. Because research contexts such as interviewing involve complex and unequal power relations, I had to understand how my involvement in this process affected the data that was generated and then analyzed. As I articulate later in this chapter, I was forced to evaluate how my close proximity to the research participants came to persuade particular points of view. Moreover, I had to understand how my 'mixed race' background as well as my immersion in the culture of competitive sport came to simultaneously provide me with both a privileged and 'marginalized' subject-position during the research interactions.

LOCATING THE RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOODS OF SPRINGFIELD

To redress the lack of health and physical activity literature that explores the lives of young people situated in low-income, urban areas I conducted my research in an area with a large 'ethnic' and 'racial' minority population that has been historically subjected to oppressive social policies and practices. This study was also framed to examine the ways a group of young people from a particular urban geographic area used their local neighborhood spaces. In order to meet these aims I initially chose to locate my research in one urban neighborhood in the southwest section of Springfield. This decision was made based on my previous experience living in this city and through discussions with community programs that provided services to 'at risk', 'underserved' or 'disadvantaged' youth populations¹³.

¹³ As noted by Holroyd and Armour (2003), these terms are often deployed to capture the impacts of low-self esteem, poverty, broken families, and crime in the lives of urban young people. However, they argue that these definitions often serve to provide reductionist and misrepresentative understandings of young people's lives and their social conditions.

THE SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOODS OF SPRINGFIELD

The southwest neighborhoods of Springfield are an example of an urban inner city area which has been historically inhabited by distinctive ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and class communities. In particular these neighborhoods have a long history of occupation by poor and working class African-Americans. Recently, this area has experienced the impacts of high levels of poverty and gang activity, even as sustained community efforts have sought to improve socio-economic conditions and eradicate criminal activity. The southwest Springfield neighborhoods were home to frequent ‘gang banging’ and high levels of drug dealing and use between the mid-1980s and early 1990s. As one writer in a Springfield newspaper put it:

In the mid-1980’s came King Crack, provider of income, sleek cars, and clothes and an unparalleled high. It was a jobs program for southwest Springfield the same way it was for South Central Los Angeles and East Oakland. In those days, Willow Park Crips and Calloway Street Bloods set handguns barking against the night.

Because of the gang scare many residents panicked and many abandoned their homes, according to Jim Bowman¹⁴ of the Springfield City Council. Landlords walked away from their houses in order to avoid paying overdue property taxes. Property prices dropped through the floor beginning in the mid 1980s, although I will describe later that this was to change dramatically beginning in the mid 1990s.

This legacy of impoverishment and criminal activity still affects many established and newer residents. As one established African-American resident put it, ‘(i)t’s hard to get that [past] out of our minds. It’s still the so-called “hood” to us’. One local African-American woman commented that ‘(g)hetto is not about income level it’s about loss of hope’. The former Southwest Precinct police commander commented that ‘(r)eal estate people tell folks they’re moving into a hip

¹⁴ This name is an alias.

neighborhood, and then I get calls when the folks are surprised because there was a gang shooting nearby. The neighborhoods do change, but they don't change overnight'. Although gang activity has declined since 1997, there has been a recent resurgence of gang-related shootings in southwest Springfield (15 shootings in 2005) and the 'Crips', 'Bloods', and Latino gangs still remain active in the area.

GENTRIFICATION OF THE SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOODS OF SPRINGFIELD

I like Nike, but wait a minute. The neighborhood supports, so put some money in it. (Public Enemy, 1990)

At the time of the study, the southwest neighborhoods were becoming increasingly gentrified, with middle-class whites loosely defined as the 'creative class' (often artists, small business owners, and young college-educated couples) living alongside primarily African-American working poor and underemployed families. While widely considered in the Springfield area to be a site of abandonment and poverty during the 1980s, beginning in the early 1990s focused community revitalization efforts, grants, and investments brought in newer businesses, including Adidas (Figure 3.1) and Nike (Figure 3.2) retail stores, and improved many dilapidated areas. As the Mayor of Springfield once commented, 'we've filled new stores with neighborhood business, added a community policing facility, helped build a Boys and Girls Club, and reclaimed a street known as "crack alley" with new homes'.

The revitalization of some areas created conflicts between established minority residents and newer, more affluent white home owners and visitors (Figure 3.3). Community Business Conglomerations began to emerge in 1989-1991 and grew enormously, albeit controversially. Most of these community groups were run by people from outside the southwest Springfield community¹⁵. These small

¹⁵ One resident commented that these Community Business Conglomerates are viewed as '(w)hite people coming into the ghetto to fix things up, when they have no clue, throwing money around, telling black people where to live'.

partnerships between government and private groups were designed to fix up and sell houses as a means of revitalizing the neighborhoods. However, increased property values and the development of homes for sale rather than rental pushed many established residents out of their neighborhoods¹⁶.

Gentrification has been a controversial and contested process for residents who live in southwest Springfield. An African-American neighborhood association president commented that '(p)ersonally, I hate it [gentrification], to me it means something racist, especially when you apply it to an area of diversity in the city. The biggest issue is career criminals, not aesthetics or longtime residents'. According to one white land developer, home ownership is a colorblind issue, implicitly driven by economics. One African-American resident who lives next to gang members and drug dealers commented that gentrification was helping to change the southwest neighborhoods for the better: 'let it come, I look forward to it, I've seen the rotten bottom part of the apple'.

An important point of analysis will be to examine the ways economic and cultural changes affected the ways in which young people use their neighborhood spaces. In their study of young people from a rural Australian township, Kraack and Kenway (2002) describe how changes to the economy and demographics have created tensions between newer and established residents. As a result, the 'social and cultural character of the township' (p.151) has been destabilized. The authors argue that 'these changes have resulted in contested readings of the landscape and its use... This has a considerable impact on constructions of young people, especially in terms of what is considered appropriate behaviour in public. Their behaviour is both spatially and temporally re-read and restricted' (p.151). The

¹⁶ Renters (predominantly African-Americans with lower incomes) are often thought of as being poor and undesirable by the property developers. Several community policies have been developed to discourage the building of rental units in favor of constructing homes that are built to own – many low-income African-American residents cannot afford the rising house prices. For instance, in 1990 the average cost for a house in southwest Springfield was \$30,000. By 2000, the average cost for a home was up to \$119,500. While 60% of all African-Americans in the Springfield metropolitan area lived in southwest Springfield in 1990 by 2000 this percentage was reduced to 48%.

ways young people shape their subjectivities in relation to the impacts of changing socio-economic conditions will be addressed further in subsequent results chapters.

RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOODS OF SPRINGFIELD

Recruitment of research participants occurred in community centers, school-based environments, and informal settings such as restaurants and parks in the southwest neighborhoods of Springfield. Additionally, techniques such as snowballing and networking were also used to recruit additional participants, many of whom were friends, siblings, classmates, or sport and physical activity peers. Most of the research participants were recruited through the local high school. The high schools in the Springfield Public School District are each supervised independently by one principal rather than one governing body. I therefore provided the principal of the local high school with a ‘Manager Consent Form’ (Appendix A) asking for permission to recruit participants through the school and a ‘Participant Information Sheet’ (Appendix B) that would inform young people about my study. These steps were required by University of Wollongong ethics procedures and helped to minimize public and institutional suspicion of the researcher. These ethical requirements also had the effect of making young people and their parents more comfortable with the research process. The principal of the high school advised me to meet with several teachers and other staff people who could recommend several students involved in a broad range of physical activities. Upon meeting these individuals, I asked them for lists of physically active young people who might be interested in taking part in the research project. I explicitly stated that I did not want to meet with only the ‘better-performing’ or ‘most-favored’ students, although I mentioned that students would have to be somewhat dependable if they were going to be in the study.

In Kraack and Kenway’s (2002) study of young people’s use of rural public spaces, school staff members were given an outline of the researchers’ selection criteria and directly recruited all 36 study participants. While many members of my cohort were initially contacted through teachers and staff members, I felt that

having them directly recruit research participants would be problematic as it would provide an another adult ‘lens’ in the recruitment process. This might serve to exclude or misrepresent the perspectives of certain young people based on an adult’s opinion and directly affect the research outcomes. For instance, I later found that many students who were initially considered ‘flaky’ or ‘lazy’ by the teachers because they missed sport practices, quit sport teams, or skipped classes were actually very dependable and eagerly participated in my study. This provides evidence that institutionalized discourses that label some students as being ‘slow’ or ‘unteachable’ mis-represent young people, with often negative consequences. Harwood (2000) argues that these institutionalized ways of labeling and devaluing young people need to be reflected upon and challenged by poststructural-informed youth researchers.

Thompson High School was particularly supportive and allowed me to use a room in their administration office to meet with students. Only one community center was resistant – the director of the Boys and Girls Club wanted to screen all interview questions before any interviews could take place. Also, contacts between the young people and me would only be allowed to take place within the center. According to this director, these steps would help insure the safety of the young people and also minimize parental concerns. However, I felt that these requests would restrict my ability to probe certain research topics, prevent me from observing the young people in other non-institutional settings, and restrict me from meeting them in other ‘informal’ ways.

To fulfill the aims of the thesis I decided to recruit young people from diverse ‘ethnic’, ‘racial’, gendered, classed, and sport/physical activity backgrounds. Parental permission sheets with a brief summary of my research informed participants that their commitment involved approximately five interviews over the course of one year (Appendix C). In addition, participants were told that they could be involved in occasional debriefings and follow-up contacts during the duration of my project.

I followed up with those respondents who expressed an interest in participating in my study and conducted short interviews to determine their willingness to participate in the project. Factors such as work, school, and family commitments precluded some recruits from being involved. During these initial interviews, general discussions regarding sport and physical activity participation took place. These discussions gave me brief glimpses of respondents' physically active lives. This information was subsequently used to construct a diverse research group. Eventually, I recruited seven young women and nine young men between the ages of 13 and 18 from a range of 'racial', 'ethnic', and national origins. For instance, Tim¹⁷, Victor, and Elliot were all born in Mexico and moved to the United States during their youth. Maureen and Irene came to the United States from Haiti and one young woman, Rubee, immigrated from Oromo (a secessionist state within Ethiopia). Seven members of the cohort considered themselves to be 'black' or African-American, one young woman referred to herself as 'French-Canadian/Hispanic' while another two young women identified with their African-American/Cherokee (Native American)/white backgrounds. Thirteen of the 16 young people attended Thompson High School which had a high percentage of 'ethnic minority' enrolment¹⁸.

'Thom,' as it is known locally, is a magnet arts school in the Springfield Public School District with a history of basketball success (the boys basketball team competes annually for the state title and sends numerous players to top university and even professional teams). Thompson High School is also the site of a nationally-renowned dance program, the 'In Motion Dance Group'. Thompson High School can be characterized as a 'demonized school' (Reay & Lucey, 2003) because it is often associated with poor academic performance, declining enrollments and severe shortages of resources. In contrast to other high schools in more affluent areas, it is frequently cited by education policy makers as a school that is under consideration of being closed as a result of this status. For instance,

¹⁷ Names of all the participants have been changed to protect their anonymity.

¹⁸ In 2004-2005, 87.5 percent of Thompson students identified themselves as American-Indian, African-American, Asian-American, or Hispanic-American. 67 percent of these students considered themselves to be African-American.

during the 2002-2003 school year Thompson High School (and all of the Springfield public schools) faced a severe budget crisis, forcing the cancellation of school days, larger class sizes, and programming cutbacks. The 2003 spring sports season was also on the chopping block, until a grassroots fundraising effort and donations from businesses and local professional athletes saved the athletics season.

While I initially intended to attract a group of young people from one neighborhood, it soon proved too difficult to recruit and maintain a group of young people who lived within one pre-designated neighborhood¹⁹. Many young people in this area lived or stayed in several places (sometimes simultaneously) depending on personal factors, family situation, economic necessity, or even sport and physical activity requirements (such as being closer to practice facilities, to participate in higher-profile physical activity or sport programs, or to work with particular coaches). The inhabitants within the young people's residences changed consistently, which contradicts the widely-held concept of a nuclear 'family' or 'home.' Many of the young people who lived in the same residence over the course of the research study had previously moved several times.

The research area, as re-configured to recruit a wider number of possible young people, eventually covered four square miles within the Southwest neighborhoods. This site encompassed the Ponderosa, Willow, Vail, Kenwood, Saragosa, Bonner, Edgar, and Harrison neighborhoods²⁰. The Arkan and Oliver neighborhoods border the research boundary on the West, the Ipswich neighborhood borders on the South, and Calvin and Middlebury neighborhoods are adjacent on the East. This 'bordering' with other areas with higher income levels and higher

¹⁹ Duncan, Duncan, Strycker, and Chaumeton (2002) suggest that residents of the same urban neighborhood share similar perceptions of their neighborhood related to social cohesion and concerns, and physical activity opportunities. However, the young people in my study consistently moved within and between several neighborhoods. This phenomenon suggests that researchers of physical activity spaces cannot only conceptualize neighborhoods as fixed and bounded units, and must take into account the fluidity and instability of neighborhood boundaries and social identities.

²⁰ The names of the neighborhoods have all been changed to keep the city name and research participants anonymous.

percentages of Caucasian residents provided interesting data that emerged through the ‘mapping’ and interview processes. This area was selected because it was broad enough to attract a wider number of possible recruits and also incorporated a number of parks, schools, and neighborhoods that were relevant to the young people living in this section of the city. According to U.S. Census data (2000), these neighborhoods have a high population of ‘non-Caucasian’ residents.²¹

Recruiting and keeping in contact with the research participants was not easy work. Besides their numerous (and often intensive) commitments in sport and physical activity, the members of the cohort had many other school, family and work responsibilities. Several participants had family members who were in prison, others came from families that spoke very little English, and some consistently drove siblings and family members to school and work. One young woman raised a baby girl during her last year of high school. In addition, these young people spent time ‘chilling out’ by themselves or with friends, or dating and having relationships. Because of their numerous commitments, several research participants were unable to complete their homework duties or even attend school on a regular basis. Some left high school entirely. At the same time, I was also juggling full-time employment as a sport coach, and commitments to this doctoral thesis which involved consistently traveling back and forth between the United States and Australia.

I often think about the young people I met who were unable to be a part of this study, or those who left the project. What were their stories or where had they gone? There was the quiet young man I met in the McDonald’s restaurant on Peachtree Boulevard with his mother and sister. During one interview ‘Parrish’ pensively told me about skateboarding and struggling with gangs in his particularly rough neighborhood.

²¹ Bonner neighborhood: 66.2 percent non Caucasian, Harrison: 63.8 percent non Caucasian, Kenwood neighborhood: 67.0 percent non Caucasian, Vail: 66.7 percent non Caucasian, Willow: 63.8 percent non Caucasian, Edgar: 48.8 percent non Caucasian, Ponderosa: 45.5 percent non Caucasian, Saragosa: 39.8 percent non Caucasian.

- Matt: How do you feel when you're skateboarding?
- Parrish: When I'm skateboarding, I just feel open. Like, I feel open, happy, a little hyper... it just makes me feel good, that I'm actually doing something that's good. That's like, healthy and will keep me out of trouble.
- Matt: Because if you weren't skateboarding what do you think you'd be doing?
- Parrish: Probably be bored, and getting into gangs and stuff like that.

During this interview Parrish talked about possibly moving to another state in the upcoming summer. He did not like living in Springfield because too many of his peers wanted to emulate older brothers and join the gangs. Also, he commented that a young person could not do things like stay out late and skateboard because of safety concerns. When I tried to re-contact him weeks later after our first interview, I found out that he had already moved. What were the stories that Parrish would have told? Other people I met provided me with glimpses of their lives, only to pass on being in the study after a meeting or two. Meeting with a researcher would be a very low priority for many young people living in an impoverished urban location. These were not individuals with leisurely lifestyles and unlimited financial resources available to them. I once met with two basketball players outside the local library who were between games in different parks. Although they were very polite, I could tell that I was interfering with their weekend basketball routine. As I will discuss later, 'playing' park basketball could mean much more to them than simply 'playing' around with friends on a nice summer day. After a few attempted phone calls to re-contact these young men it became clear that they were uninterested in participating. This study is as much about the lives of these people as the young people who did manage to stay involved.

GENERATING THE DATA

IMPLEMENTING A 'SNAPSHOT' APPROACH TO INTERVIEWING

Open-ended interviews were primarily used to generate data. I wanted to gather the stories of young people in order to discern how they engaged with social discourses in unique ways in order to constitute their selves. Using an analytical framework informed by poststructural theory, I wanted to understand how their

talk provides evidence of how discourses enabled and constrained their ability and desire to become particular idealized subjects. Because descriptive accounts are historically and culturally situated, they provide insights into the different ways individuals take up and deploy particular discursive resources to construct their subjectivities. By gathering descriptive accounts the ‘ambivalent complexity’ (Gunaratnam, 2003, p.6) and contingent nature of the young people’s subjectivities and life meanings could be understood. This focus on the ways young people talk about themselves and others was made by an understanding of language to be the ‘interpretive framework’ by which physically active young people come to understand themselves and their social world (George, 2004).

While McLeod (2000a, 2000b) suggests in her study of Australian school students that a longitudinal approach to interviewing is most useful to capture the processes by which individuals’ lives develop, Scheurich (1997) argues that ‘(l)engthening the duration of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee does not necessarily (teleologically) lead to better communication or better understanding, even if the researcher intends it so’ (p. 76). He further poses that ‘(t)o assume increased interaction leads to better communication is the imposition of a modernist (human psychology) viewpoint on the event that we call interviewing’ (p. 76). Scheurich further suggests that interviewing does not lead to a ‘better’ knowledge of individuals’ lives, because within this process meanings and understandings are constantly changing and shifting, in sometimes contradictory ways. The interview is an unstable and indeterminate relationship and produces multiple ‘truths’. Taking Scheurich’s comments into account, I used a ‘snapshot’ approach to interviewing over the course of four years which meant conducting intermittent interviews with the research participants. This proved to be most convenient for them and provided me with insights into the young people’s lives as they saw them at particular points in time.

At the time of their initial interviews the young people were aged 13-18. The interviews took place in a variety of settings such as a high school office, a pizza

shop, the Springfield City College²² library, or in their homes. Although prepared interview questions were used to guide the interviews, the overall atmosphere was conversational and informal. The majority of interviews took place with one participant, although some interviews were conducted in pairs and threes when the participants were familiar with each other. Between five and seven interviews per participant took place, although the following up on the ‘geographic mapping’ interviews usually added another two brief interviews. Interviews typically lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

Specific themes of the interviews were related to health, spatial sport/physical activity movements, daily life practices, physical culture, ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, and migration. Issues of schooling, gender, social class, family life, and peer relationships were also interwoven into these interviews. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed immediately in order to inform the next round of interviews. While it usually required only one or two interviews to discuss health issues, the discussion of geography themes (i.e. use of neighborhood spaces) sometimes lasted over the course of three interviews.

The first one or two interviews focused on issues of physical activity and understandings of health. As part of gathering the young people’s perspectives about physical activity participation, questions were designed to provide data around their participation in activities such as dancing (tap, hip hop, African, and modern), basketball, football, cheerleading, bowling, volleyball, soccer, and skateboarding. A crucial component to these interviews also included asking the young people what it meant to be ‘healthy’, what was required to live a ‘healthy’ life, and whether they found healthiness to be a desirable state. Additionally, they were asked about what they found to be unhealthy and also what their various sources of health information were. During these interviews the young people were also shown examples of athletes and other physical activity participants in order to discuss their constructions of body image and eating/exercise practices. I

²² Name of this college has been changed.

chose to ask questions associated with health and the ‘healthy’ body in order to understand the ways the young people positioned themselves in relation to health and physical activity discourses. Based on a preliminary reading of available health and physical activity literature, and after the interviews, my initial assumption was that the young people might equate the attainment of health with sport, exercise, fitness, and physical activity participation.

To further investigate the physical activity experiences of young people, the next two or three interviews were used to describe the ways young people used their urban neighborhood spaces in order to construct a sense of self. As Holloway notes (2000) ‘(i)dentify formation is deeply embedded within urban geographic contexts – the groups that interact within particular geographic contexts, neighborhoods for example, form the frame of reference for identity construction’ (p. 199). From this perspective, I needed data that would help address analytical questions such as: What meanings of physical activity and health are (re)produced as young people engage with their neighborhood spaces? How are young people positioned through their use of neighborhood spaces, how do they position themselves, and what discursive resources do they draw from to negotiate this positioning? By using interviews, observations, and geographic mapping processes I was able to examine how the young people constructed their subjectivities ‘in different ways, resulting in different outcomes, in different geographic contexts’ (Holloway, 2000, p. 199).

For the ‘geographic mapping’ interviews, the young people were asked to describe their various movements during a typical week, and were asked to describe going between and participating in these spaces. The young people were also asked to describe why they used or did not use certain spaces, and to describe the people or physical activity programs that made use of these areas. They were also asked to show how these sites related to other unused or avoided areas. City maps (with features such as parks, schools, and streets) of Springfield were used during interviews to help the young people reconstruct their various physical activity movements. Two mapping interviews took place per person, to capture both their

physical activity movements during the summer months and those that took place during school sessions. The young people were asked to describe all of their daily movements during a typical week including doing chores, school commitments, and physical activities. Particular attention was paid to their descriptions of being physically active in relation to local neighborhood spaces.

The next round of interviews involved asking questions about the influences of family, friends, and popular culture on the young people's physical activity engagements. Questions were asked such as 'Is sport and/or physical activity important to your family?' and 'What physical activity or sport do you watch on TV?' were asked. References were also made to particular clothing choices and styles. These questions were intended to probe the ways the young people negotiated a range of social, cultural and globalized 'symbolic' representations in order to constitute themselves as physically active subjects.

The final interviews were based around issues of 'race', 'ethnicity', and migration in order to understand the ways these discourses operated in the relationship between the individual and their various social and cultural contexts. This involved asking questions that encouraged the young people to talk about the ways 'racial', 'ethnic', and diasporic discourses impacted upon their interpersonal and emotional lives (Gunaratnam, 2003). These interviews opened with general questions asking about their 'ethnic' or 'racial' backgrounds and origins. As the interview progressed, the questions more specifically addressed how the participants engaged with physical activity in relation to their 'racial' and 'ethnic' backgrounds. This involved making inquiries such as: 'What other 'racial' or 'ethnic' groups do you see in your physical activity spaces?' and 'Have you ever had any negative experiences based on your 'racial' or 'ethnic' identity?'

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed immediately in order to inform the next round of interviews. Descriptions of young people's geographic physical activity movements were transformed into maps for each member of the cohort through the use of Yahoo.com and Mapquest city maps. I felt that these maps

were informative because they illustrated the schools, parks, streets, and gyms where the young people engaged in physical activity. The maps also broadly defined the range of the young people's physical activity movements in the southwest section of Springfield. However, I felt that more sophisticated maps could be developed to better represent the routes that the young people took through the neighborhoods. Also, I wanted to represent the generated geographic data in a more graphically-pleasing format in both conference presentations and in this thesis. I thus spent several months researching quantitative geographic mapping techniques and hired a research assistant to import hundreds of data points (the addresses of all neighborhood spaces used by the participants) into Microsoft Excel format in order to track the dates, times, and locations of the young people's daily movements (Figure 3.4). These spreadsheets were subsequently imported into computers containing GIS (Geographic Information Systems) software. These computers also contained a base map that integrated socio-economic data from the 2000 United States census into the neighborhoods (Figure 3.5). My aim was to determine patterns of the young people's movements in relation to 'racial' and classed demographics. In the end I generated several multi-dimensional maps and models of the young people's use of their neighborhoods through the resources of the University of Springfield Department of Geography.

However, after the completion of the maps I decided against using them in my thesis, even though they took an extensive amount of time and effort to complete. I felt that the more sophisticated maps still mis-represented the ways in which the young people used their neighborhood spaces. For example, in order to trace the pathways used by the young people I had to gather all the addresses of their neighborhood spaces. Yet, many times the participants could not recall exactly where their friends lived. Sometimes, they could not remember the specific routes they took when walking to school. In other instances, they talked about riding their bikes freely with no particular routes or destinations in mind. These factors made it virtually impossible to track all of their daily movements in their neighborhoods. Global Positioning System (GPS) devices could have been worn

by the young people and used to track their everyday movements. Yet, from a poststructural perspective it is problematic to use Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to monitor the everyday movements of young people. The use of an invasive surveillance device to monitor individuals' behaviors would be a modern day version of the panopticon described by Foucault (1979). Through the use of GPS devices the participants would be aware that they were being 'observed and on display' under 'the gaze of authority' (Tsang, 2000, p.50). Other practical considerations were that the GPS devices were very expensive (approximately 1500 USD each) and too expensive for my limited research budget. It would also have been too time-consuming to distribute and collect the GPS devices on a regular basis, and these small devices were likely to have been regularly misplaced.

Further complicating the use of the GIS maps, all of the maps depicted the young people's movements only 'as the crow flies'. As such, these linear maps failed to capture both the specificity and complexity of the young people's movements within and outside of their neighborhoods. Furthermore, Crouch and Matless (1996) posit that geographic encounters cannot be understood in a linear and orderly manner, since different physical activity spaces are psychically and materially experienced by subjects in 'kaleidoscopic' fashion.

For the reasons outlined above, I have decided not to represent the maps which were generated through the data in this thesis because they were either too crude or have become overly technical and require extensive interpretation. The use of the Yahoo and Mapquest maps in this thesis would be misrepresentative because of their crudeness and use of linear routes. On the other hand, using the more sophisticated GIS maps would involve an extensive deployment of scientific rationality that would run counter to one of the aims of this thesis which is to disrupt the discourses of instrumentalism and 'technocratic rationality' (Tinning, 1991) that have currency in the majority of existing sport, physical activity, and health studies. The data that is used to underpin the majority of the analysis in this thesis comes directly from the interview texts, even as it is not represented

here in map format. Patterns of use and detailed descriptions of the participants, activities, and social structures at work in the neighborhood spaces became apparent through the young people's talk. As such, the 'texts' of the 'geographic mapping' interviews were sufficient to determine the young people's usage of neighborhood spaces and are deployed in this thesis to support my arguments. The exclusion of the maps from this thesis does not reduce the efficacy of my spatial analyses.

COMPLEMENTING INTERVIEWING WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

As noted by Scraton et al. (2005), individuals' everyday lived experiences cannot be captured through the use of only interviews in the research process. They suggest the use of additional research methods such as autobiography, oral histories, and narratives to generate data that engages with the 'intersectionality of social identities and social processes' (p.85). From this perspective, this thesis employed several other qualitative methods such as journal writing, photography, videotaping and participant observation in addition to interviewing. However, some of these methods were more successful than others. For instance, I originally intended to have young people write diary entries about their physical activity experiences. Laberge and Albert (1999) advocate the use of reflective essay writing instead of interviews in their study of adolescents to overcome the difficulties encountered in 'face-to-face' interviews:

In previous research, we noticed that it was difficult to get adolescents to articulate their genuine opinions in face-to-face interviews. Adolescents are often reticent to express themselves, either because they are afraid that they might give a wrong answer, or because they feel uncomfortable in this artificial form of interaction. As a result of informal talks with some adolescents, we decided that essays on an issue of concern to their age-group would be a more suitable strategy for eliciting responses. (p. 246)

This was quite contrary to my own experience. It seemed that talking was much more preferred to writing diary entries because of its convenience and flexibility.

While I did hand out journals to all of the participants, when I asked them about their writing during the interviews most had written nothing or had not brought their journals with them. It seemed that writing was a much more laborious process for them and an additional burden in their lives. The essays from Laberge and Albert (1999) were completed during allotted class times (75 minutes), whereas the diary writing in my study would be an extra assignment for the young people to complete.

I also originally intended for the young people to take photographs of physical activities and recreation spaces (such as basketball courts, playing fields, parks, recreation centers, and informal activity spaces) along with photographs of themselves, friends and others who inhabited these spaces. However, because of my experiences with the distribution and collection of the diaries, I felt that participant photography would be too expensive and time consuming to justify the effort. The young people would also be taking photos of other young people outside of this study which was not allowed under the ethical guidelines set by the University of Wollongong.

Because I still wanted to have a greater understanding of the spaces the young people inhabited, participants were asked if I could photograph and videotape them. All participants signed permission waivers (Appendix D) to have their images used in my thesis and in conference presentations and journal articles. Because a digital camera could be toted around in my car as I drove through southwest Springfield, I was easily able to take over 120 photos of young people and their neighborhoods. Photographic images could be conveniently downloaded into my computer in a matter of seconds and were extensively used to inform the interview process. Generating and editing videotaped footage became too time intensive and laborious and was discontinued. The preliminary videotapes that I viewed were of poor quality and often contained nothing much more than one individual riding a skateboard or someone stretching out before a track meet. However, I feel that with more time and resources the videotapes could have been of better quality and involved more of the young people in their individual and

group physical activities in a variety of neighborhood spaces. This type of videotaped data could have further contextualized where the young people participated in physical activity and how they used these spaces.

Observations also proved to be very useful in contextualizing subsequent rounds of interviews. Observations involved watching the young people without actively participating in their sport or physical activities. I observed the young people in activities such as lunchtime ‘open gym’ indoor soccer at the high school, community basketball tournaments in the parks, wrestling, basketball, and running competitions and practices, dance recitals, and skateboarding on the street and in stairways. Notes were taken regarding physical settings, individual and group interactions, activities, behaviors, languages, nonverbal communication, and what did not take place (Mertens, 1998). For instance, during an ‘open gym’ soccer game at the high school I noticed that it was only the African, Mexican, and white young men who played on the gym floor. Their female counterparts would often gather around the entrance door or sit in the bleachers, and, while seemingly too engrossed in conversation to play, I took notes about how they would often watch the games and sometimes kick the ball when it came towards them. It became apparent that many of these young women wanted to play soccer, but they were excluded from playing through a unique system of picking teams called ‘next’, which will be further explored in Chapter Five. The notes that I took regarding the young men and women at the lunchtime indoor soccer were used to probe certain issues around spatial hierarchies in subsequent interviews.

THE IMPACTS OF REFLEXIVITY ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In early 2003 I moved into the southwest neighborhoods of Springfield for research and economic reasons. Living in the research area contributed to my knowledge of the young people’s lives and their neighborhoods and to their understandings of me. Most importantly, my close proximity to the study participants (two young women even lived across the street from me) provided convenient access from which to meet with them on a consistent basis. As mentioned previously, it was often difficult to co-ordinate interviews because of

various school, work, sport, family, and personal factors, so moving into the research site proved to be invaluable. I could meet up with the young people on my way home from work, during their lunch at the nearby high school, or down the street in a restaurant or pizza shop. Sometimes I would visit them in their homes. We often encountered each other in casual ways: often when driving by I would stop to talk while many were walking to school, to the bus, or hanging around with friends. I would often see one young man practicing on a soccer field before my own soccer games were played. Sometimes I ate dinner or watched soccer games in his Mexican restaurant. After losing contact with one young woman for over a year, I met her older sister working in a local supermarket. We were soon able to re-establish contact.

The insights that I garnered from living in close proximity to the research cohort were often used to contextualize our interviews. When two young women talked about ‘troublemaking’ at a house on the corner of SW 10th Ave. and Piccadilly St.²³ and why they never walked this direction to play or catch the bus, I knew what they were talking about. I had been told about the dubious history of this residence by another neighbor (a few years ago it had been shot at 40 times). I understood what one Haitian young woman was talking about when she said the ‘crackheads’²⁴ prevented her from jogging down SW Lakewood Ave. at night. I had also seen these people walking down the street like zombies in the middle of the night in search of another drug ‘hit’. Another young man described how he had to work everyday until 2 pm at his restaurant before he could play soccer or ride his scooter. I knew that his family was shorthanded at the restaurant because his father had been incarcerated for allegedly dealing drugs in the restroom. I was there eating in his restaurant the night his lawyer visited their family.

The young people in my study were provided glimpses of my life as well. During an interview where I was trying to map out the physical activity movements of

²³ The real address has been changed.

²⁴ As I discuss later, this young woman also uses the term ‘crackheads’ to describe the African-American young men and women ‘hanging out’ in the parks.

two young women, I was struck by how much they knew about *my own* movements. They knew when I moved into their neighborhood, when a new roommate moved into my house, and they saw me leave and come home from work every day at specific times. We both knew things like how the drug dealers lived next door to my house and we often peeked out the windows to check out when deals were made (here's the process: a car pulls up, honks the horn, man runs from the house into the car, they do the deal while driving around the block, then car drops off the man back at the house). One night we had all woken up at the same time when there was a high speed police chase down our street. In some ways it seemed that this established a sense of solidarity between us. It was us against some of the seedier aspects of 'our' neighborhood. But while I felt a sense of intimacy with many members of the study, was I *really* a part of their 'worlds'? To this day, I still wonder how they constructed me. In what ways did they come to understand me? How did my presence intervene in the stories of their lives? These factors must have played a crucial role in the ways we came to engage with each other during the interviews.

The previous description of my experiences living in the Southwest neighborhoods of Springfield illustrates the need to constantly interrogate and re-contextualize the data that was generated through interactive qualitative methods. Wright (1991a) argues in her study of female and male students' engagements with physical education practices that the subjectivity(ies) of the researcher is crucially linked to the methodological direction of an empirical study. According to Wright, understanding the researchers' involvement in the research process is of critical import particularly when she/he might be 'a member of the culture in which the participants in the study are located' (p.16). Thus, from this position, I argue that my close geographic proximity to the research came to effect the ways I engaged with the research participants, and how they engaged with me. Living in the southwest neighborhoods of Springfield directly shaped the types of questions that I asked in the interviews and how these questions were negotiated by the research participants and I. As argued previously, shifting power relationships were an integral part of our research interactions.

While my geographic proximity to the research participants provided me with a sense of closeness with them, I would also argue that my middle class ‘academic’ background provided me with a way of behaving, speaking, and even moving (Bourdieu, 1984) that distinguished me from the research participants. It is highly likely that they recognized me and the interview space as embodiments of the (white) middle class and (re)enacted numerous subjectivities in order to reconfigure existing power relations accordingly. While my ‘mixed’ Korean-American and *mestizo* background might have been negotiated more easily than ‘whiteness’, it is also likely that the predominantly ‘black’ African-American and Haitian research participants came to view me as still being an ‘outsider’ to their lives and cultures. While it is difficult to extricate how my shifting and fluid subjectivities came to impact upon the power relations within the research interactions, the ways the research participants came to negotiate me as an ‘outsider’ is worth speculating about. For instance, during the interviews my sport background seemed to garner a certain amount of respect with the ‘black’ or African-American young men, because I understood their training regimens and their desires to play college or university sports. Yet, I often came away from the interviews feeling as if their responses were either overly polite or indicative of their disinterest. It was as if my ‘Asianness’ coupled with a Latino background provided them with a sense of uncertainty. As I argue later in Chapter Five, these young ‘black’ men often invested themselves in practices associated with their conceptualization of a fixed and binary ‘black’ culture and identity. As such, I fit outside of their ‘black’/white binary understanding of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’. Also, I argue in Chapter Five that the more impoverished young ‘black’ men often derided other ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ minority groups such as ‘Mexicans’ because they were seen as inferior athletes on the basketball court. I came away from the interviews with the ‘black’ men from very impoverished backgrounds feeling as if I was perhaps a novelty or even a hindrance to their daily sport and school commitments, and that I was devalued because of my identification as an ‘ethnic’/‘mixed’ male who participated in an ‘ethnic’ sport such as soccer. The only interviews with a ‘black’ male that felt ‘open’ and ‘comfortable’ occurred

with Bill, who came from a much more middle-class background. This compatibility with Bill suggests that I did indeed represent a more middle class habitus and subject-position that the majority of the ‘black’ males came to view as ‘outside’ their own ‘black’ culture. As such, they sometimes deployed behaviors such as acting ‘cool’ or disinterested²⁵ in order to reconfigure the power relations in the interview settings.

In comparison, I felt that the young ‘black’ women in the participants, who I argue throughout this thesis were much less interested in organized or competitive sport, came to view the interview sites as spaces where they could quite comfortably talk about their lives. While my ‘mixed race’ background was quite distinct from their ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ backgrounds, I argue that my male presence was viewed as ‘non-threatening’ and offered a space where they could comfortably talk about their life practices, feelings, and experiences. Indeed, sometimes they would go so far as to ask me questions about my own personal relationships. Maureen and Irene, in particular, would often talk about ‘fixing me up’ with one of their friends or even suggest that I needed to call *them* on a more regular basis.

I argue that my male presence was at times considered ‘non-threatening’ and thus provided these young women with a space from which they could more easily talk seriously, laugh, and joke about their lives and practices in ways that gave us a sense of friendship or solidarity (Wright, 1991b). Many of the young women in my participants came from single mother families where the father had left home. Several of the young women, particularly those from diasporic backgrounds, also mentioned to me that they had difficult relations with their fathers who often closely monitored and restricted their lives because they did not want them to become too ‘Americanized’. As I argue throughout this thesis, even the young women’s male coaches came to exercise power in ways that made them feel uncomfortable or unhappy about their bodies and selves. Finally, as I argue in

²⁵ This type of deliberately (re)enacted ‘cool pose’ is described by Majors and Bilson (1990) as an adaptive strategy that black males have used in order to cope with the effects of racism and social inequalities in the United States.

Chapter Five, the male counterparts to these young women systematically derided and excluded them during sport and physical activity because the men considered the young women to be inferior athletes. I argue that my interview spaces worked in some ways to provide the young women with a space of ‘confession’, whereby they could interact with me and their friends and talk about their lives in a comfortable and relaxed manner. O’Flynn (2004) makes the claim that the interviewer/interviewee relationship can exist as a space of ‘confession’, whereby ‘individuals examine themselves and position themselves as a subject of discourse’ (p.47).

However, my argument above does not advance the claim that the young women and myself existed as ‘outside of power’ in our relationships. For instance, I believe that the young women’s ‘flirting’ was a deliberate practice that they (re)enacted to subvert the hegemonic male gaze of their teachers, coaches, fathers, and even their male peers. As I argue later on, when Maureen dances she often flirts and teases her male partners as a means of subverting the dominant male gaze. In a similar sense then, the young women’s ‘flirting’ would also be a means for them to re-alter the power relations of the interview site that most often works to privilege the middle class researcher who is seen as the oppressive ‘outsider’. While I make some claims to friendship and intimacy with the young women (and some of the young men, too) in my research study, I also believe that at this point, one year after the conclusion of the final round of interviews, I do not have a continuing friendship or relationship with any research participant. They have moved on to new jobs, they live in different houses, and they have gone to colleges and universities. Simultaneously, my numerous trips between Australia and the United States and commitments to this thesis and employment have rendered me all but invisible in their everyday lives.

Taking these factors together, I came away from the research interactions feeling as if I simultaneously negotiated my status as ‘insider’ *and* ‘outsider’. The interview sites became spaces of confession, coercion, subversion, and even ‘normalcy’. The interview texts that were generated must therefore be considered

as both disruptive of discursive norms and also as simply the young people telling me *what they think I want to hear*.

Drawing from my prismatic theoretical perspective, I developed several analytical approaches that were used to try and make sense of the texts that emerged from this complex power-laden relationship. Through the implementation of a multi-faceted qualitative research methodology, I attempted to disrupt the notion of ‘unbiased’ or ‘objective’ ethnographic researching, whilst also subverting the notion of ‘insider/outsider’ binaries. As Nayak (2003) argues, this type of empirical research that responds to the fluid and shifting nature of power and subjectivity can disrupt established dichotomies, such as those that exist between the ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: NEGOTIATING THE DATA

In order to respond to the contingent and shifting nature of the interview texts and generated data, the young people’s narratives were continually reviewed and used to inform the direction of subsequent interviews. Analysis was therefore an ongoing process, rather than taking place in a linear fashion. Mertens (1998) suggests that ‘data analysis in qualitative studies is an ongoing process. It does not occur only at the end of the study as is typical in most quantitative studies’ (p. 348). Subjective judgments were continually made in accordance to my own shifting and changing subject-positions during the research study. For example, in the early stages of the study I was primarily interested in how community sport and recreation programs catering to ‘underserved’ and ‘disadvantaged’ populations (re)produced particular meanings surrounding health and physical activity. As the study progressed it became apparent that the young people in this area engaged with many discursive resources found in ‘non-institutional’ or ‘informal’ physical activity spaces. To account for this new information, I changed the scope and the focus of the study. This shift in research direction had direct impacts upon the nature of data that was generated and analyzed. This further points to the ways narratives are contingently produced and are not

‘singularly definable’ but are rather ‘multilayered and multifaceted’ (Harwood, 2000, p.57).

By using qualitative methods such as interviews, occasions were provided for the research participants to re-articulate and invoke particular gendered, ‘racial’, and ‘ethnic’ subjectivities. This allowed me to investigate how the young people constructed their subjectivities and life meanings by negotiating the social discourses around them. By providing spaces from which the young people could articulate their subjectivities and life experiences, I was also able to discern the ways in which particular discursive resources worked to construct their lives. As George (2004) notes, ‘participants are interpellated or hailed by the subject positions existing within dominant discursive formations’ (p. 165). Referring to Louis Althusser (1971), Gunaratnam (2003) similarly suggests that ‘it becomes a matter of how people *do* “race” or ethnicity in the interviews by being called upon’ (p.117, emphasis mine). While this study focuses primarily upon ‘racial’ and cultural discourses, all qualitative researchers commit a ‘rhetorical excess’ (Butler, 1998) and invoke particular performances from the research participants by probing particular research themes.

Because the interview texts were created and worked with in relation to my own shifting and changing interests and subjectivities, they could not be seen as the only possible ‘real’ or ‘objective’ accounts of the young people’s lives. This suggests that the ‘voice’ of the ‘Other’ that is created through the research process cannot be treated as ‘an entity unto itself’, that is ‘unitary, separate, singular, coherent, and whole’ (Tsang, 2000, p.48). The ‘voice’ that is constructed through the research process is actually contingent upon the circumstances of its creation. Scheurich (1997) notes that ‘(w)hen we proceed, then, as if we have “found” or “constructed” the best or the key or the most important interpretation, we are misportraying what has occurred’ (p. 73).

Scheurich (1997) further argues that the analytical process then ‘is not the development of an accurate representation of data, as the positivist approach

assumes, but a creative interaction between the conscious/unconscious researcher and the decontextualized data...' (p. 63). Because generated data cannot 'objectively' represent the truth about young people's lives, 'data might be better conceived as the material for telling a story where the challenge becomes to generate a polyvalent base that is used to vivify interpretation as opposed to "support" or "prove"' (Lather, 1991, p.10). Knowledge was co-produced amongst shifting and fluid social locations and subjectivities during the interviews. As such, I approached the generated data as contingently constructed 'texts'. These 'texts' provided multiple glimpses of the young people's lives at particular points of time and were not considered as universal or truth-laden accounts or discoveries.

To interrogate these multiple 'texts' I devised several analytical questions that follow the lines of inquiry raised in Chapter One and Chapter Two. I first read through the generated data texts and interrogated them with the pre-determined research questions. These questions probed around certain themes that led to the development of the next three 'discussion' chapters. These analytical questions were pre-conceived to address the themes of space, the body, and the subject/subjectivities. In particular, the 'texts' generated by the young people in this study speak powerfully to the ways they engaged with normalizing discourses in order to constitute their subjectivities. It became evident through the range of the young people's talk that particular discourses and practices surrounding health, sport, and physical activity worked to construct the young people's sense of self.

While this general trend became apparent upon interrogating the data, more specific patterns in the data emerged. Some of these became more compelling than others to me in relation to the primary research questions. This required that I address and represent them in this thesis, particularly in relation to the multiple and fluid 'black' subjectivities taken up by some of the young men and women. While several of the young people defined themselves as 'black' ('Bill', 'Rube', and 'Tara'), the interviews from the young women 'Irene', 'Maureen', and 'Sasha' and the young men 'Neal', 'Mark', 'Ricky', and 'John' were particularly

illustrative of the ways ‘black’ individuals come to take up ‘essentialist’, ‘diasporic’, and ‘hybrid’ subjectivities. Furthermore, the interviews from these individuals consistently referred to the cultures of dance and basketball as spaces where ‘black’ subjectivities were taken up, negotiated and resisted. As a result, the cultures of basketball and dance were analyzed at the expense of other physical activities such as skateboarding, bike riding, soccer, and running. This meant that some of the ‘black’ (‘Bill’, ‘Rube’, ‘Sharon’, and ‘Tara’) and ‘Mexican-American’ participants (‘Tim’, ‘Victor’, and ‘Elliot’) who participated in these latter activities were only briefly featured in the analysis chapters or were excluded completely. Using a ‘traditional’ thesis format which includes only three data analysis chapters further restricted opportunities to include the voices of all study participants. As such, only the ‘voices’ of approximately half of the 16 young people came to be included in the next three ‘analysis’ chapters, at the expense of the remainder of the participants. The process of excluding and ‘reducing’ some of the generated data in order to interrogate emerging themes as I analyzed and deployed them demonstrates the subjective nature of conducting interpretive research. From this stance, interpretive studies such as mine are conducted in relation to subjective judgments made around the data and can make no generalizable claims, only context-specific arguments in relation to formative and emergent research processes and themes (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

In Chapter Four I explore the ways the young people engaged with health discourses in order to constitute themselves as physically active subjects. This analysis emerged because many of the interviews with the participants seemed to indicate their negotiation of prevalent Anglo-centric health imperatives and body ideals. At the same time, some of the young ‘black’ and Haitian women, in particular, provided responses that disrupted the dominant notion of ‘fitness + dieting = health’. The following questions proved valuable in addressing the young people’s engagements with health discourses:

- In what ways do the young people draw upon, reject, and subvert particular health discourses in order to constitute themselves as physically active subjects?
- How do the young people draw from their ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and diasporic backgrounds and identities in order to align themselves with and against particular notions of health and body stereotypes?
- By engaging themselves with these notions, how do the young people come to know themselves and others around them as gendered, racialized, and classed subjects?

It also emerged through the interviews (particularly in the spatial interviews) that different spaces had distinctive patterns of use. The physical activity spaces (both institutional and ‘informal’) were used in ways directly tied one’s gendered and racialized subjectivity. Basketball spaces, particularly the neighborhood parks and ‘open gyms’, were linked with neo-liberal and post-industrial discourses that were constitutive of particular ‘black’ masculinities. Therefore, in Chapter Five I describe the complex social and cultural processes through which certain ‘informal’ basketball spaces became commodified and worked to provide the young men with particular knowledges and subjectivities. The pertinent questions used to frame this analysis were:

- How do the basketball spaces (re)produce particular modes of cultural representation associated with dominant neo-liberal sport and physical activity discourses?
- How do these discourses intersect with broader discourses of gender, ‘race’, and class and co-jointly produce ‘black’ masculine subjectivities?
- Through what identificatory processes do the young men come to exist in particular locations of power and also create and maintain hegemonic masculine cultures in basketball spaces?

It became evident from the spatial interviews that many of the young women were excluded from ‘informal’ basketball spaces. While many of the young women

quit participating in competitive sport, many of them continued to use school, community, and club spaces to dance. This information provided a crucial point of access to investigate how spatial processes and power relations operating in school-based dance spaces work to produce particular knowledges and subjectivities, often centered around the body, for young women. In Chapter Six I demonstrate that a broad constellation of discursive resources are available to these young women and are at work in the ways they engage with institutional spaces. This analysis is made by bringing in commentary that describes the young women's use of non-institutional spaces such as community dance festivals, nightclubs, and even rooms in their homes. The following questions were used in this analysis of dance spaces and feminine subjectivities:

- How do the social practices of institutionalized and 'informal' dance spaces work to include or exclude the young women?
- Is access to these spaces related to notions of embodiment, physical capability and choice of dance?
- How might these dance spaces also serve to (re)produce dominant Western discourses related to gender, 'race', 'ethnicity', class, and sexuality?
- What meanings, subjectivities, and bodies are produced through the use of these spaces?

Through the analysis of these questions I intend to share several 'sense-making stories' that exist within the larger 'experiential story' of the research study (Tsang, 2000, p.50). It is my hope and intention that these stories (and what is missing from these stories) are 'made sense of' in different ways by my research participants, their families, community and school groups, and academic researchers alike.

CONCLUSIONS

My interpretive research methodology was designed to produce multiple and contradictory narratives, rather than unifying accounts of the young people's lives. While I used ethnographic methods such as interviewing and observations, I argue

that my interpretive methodology disrupts traditional ways of conducting ethnographic research by fashioning together several qualitative methods as informed and underpinned by poststructural and postcolonial theories. By moving away from humanist notions of 'objectivity', I disrupt conventional ways of conducting ethnographic research which have historically served to homogenize and misrepresent the lives of individuals living in poor urban areas. I have taken great care to outline the ways my own subjectivity is implicated in the research process. For instance, I have demonstrated how my own geographic proximity to the research participants and my autobiographical background has persuaded the individuals in my participants to (re)enact certain discursive practices. In so doing, I make the claim that the research relationship is not 'objective' but rather it is power-laden and constitutive of multiple and shifting subjectivities. This means that my analysis has been structured to account for the contingency and fluidity of interview 'texts', rather than conceiving of the young people's 'voices' as authentic and static 'facts'.

Following this explication around the complex issues surrounding the research process, I located my research methodology in an interpretive paradigm that simultaneously critiques positivist and traditional ethnographic modes of research whilst involving a flexible approach to data generation and analysis. While I make some claims to ethnography because I fashion together qualitative methods such as interviewing and observations, I instead want to emphasize the flexibility of my approach that was used to provide multiple sophisticated analyses of the young people's lives and subjectivities. In the following three chapters I draw from my interpretive and critical methodological strategy in order to engage with the young people's talk that emerged out of the research interactions. Throughout these analyses, I explore the complex subject-positions that the young people took up in relation to their engagements with health, sport, and physical activity discourses.

Note

Images in Chapters 3 and 5 have been removed due to large file sizes

CHAPTER FOUR: 'PUMP WEIGHTS, EAT RIGHT': YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENGAGEMENTS WITH HEALTH DISCOURSES

INTRODUCTION

A new popular health consciousness pervades our culture. The concern with personal health has become a national preoccupation. Ever increasing personal effort, political attention, and consumer dollars are being expended in the name of health. (Crawford, 1980, p.365)

The main focus of this thesis involves investigating the ways young people constitute their subjectivities by engaging with the dominant health and physical activity discourses that have currency in Western societies. In this chapter I examine the effects of the healthism discourse (Crawford, 1980) on the lives of the young people in my study. Through the analysis I demonstrate that the young people's subjectivities are made possible through 'specific practices of subjection, practices which function through games of truth and relations of power' (Harwood, 2000, p.37). Specifically, I investigate the ways health is defined and practiced by the young people in relation to powerful health policy/promotion strategies. As prefaced in Chapter One, the 'truths' associated with health and physical activity are resources by which young people come to talk about being 'healthy/unhealthy' and 'fit/unfit'. However, while I want to describe the health discourses that impact upon the young people's lives, I am also interested in understanding how they make specific choices about health and take up certain 'health' and physical activity practices in order to constitute their subjectivities. In particular, I want to illustrate how the young people come to take up and deploy their 'healthy' practices in order to constitute their plural and nuanced 'racial' and 'ethnic' subjectivities.

To achieve these aims I first draw on health literature written from a critical and/or poststructural position to illustrate the ways a dominant healthism

discourse provides a resource for the ways the young people engage with their bodies and selves. I then present an overview of the young people's talk about health to illustrate the consistent ways they constructed health as a desirable state of being that could be achieved through the adoption of prescriptive eating and exercise²⁶ practices. This conception of health crystallized in their talk around 'unhealthiness', which was directly tied to the image of the 'couch potato' – a person who was sedentary, unmotivated, and constantly ate too much 'junk' food.

I argue that this metaphor of the 'couch potato' has come to have great currency within Western societies and represents an uncritical equation of a 'heavy' or 'fat' body shape with moral laxity. As sociologist John Evans (2003) notes, the 'couch potato' image signifies the widespread belief that certain segments of the population have failed to exercise and eat properly 'in the apparently sedentary, sofa-lounging, fat-guzzling conditions of contemporary society' (p.88). Furthermore, this 'couch potato' comes to signify the connection between health and appearance, whereby 'thin' or 'strong' bodies are considered to be more attractive and as reflecting a person's well-being and commitment to self-improvement practices (Jutel, 2005). After this initial discussion, I then delve more deeply into how the young men and women defined 'health' and 'healthy' bodies in different ways from each other in relation to their gendered and racialized backgrounds. By analyzing the young people's talk about health and physical activity, it becomes clear that they took up and contested 'healthy' practices in very diverse and complex ways from each other and in comparison to other predominantly white research cohorts²⁷. This analysis was informed by

²⁶ Following Fullagar (2003), I argue that in relation to health discourses, the participants in my study describe a particular form of physical activity and leisure that can be categorized as 'exercise' because it is bodily movement that almost exclusively involves internalized regulation, discipline, and management. In their talk about health, they are describing a version of leisure and physical activity that is 'work-like' (p.53) and a means to prevent disease and illness and bring about personal 'well-being'.

²⁷ While it has been noted that young people in predominantly white research cohorts (e.g. Wright et al., 2006) often construct their healthy subjectivities in accordance with the dominant practices afforded to them in the Western healthism discourse, further research is necessary to understand how these young people might also take up shifting positions in relation to discourses of health and physical activity, as well as broader cultural discourses of gender and 'whiteness' (Nayak, 2003).

Foucault's (1997a) concept of the 'technologies of the self' which suggests that individuals are able to invest themselves in certain health and physical activity discourses in order to constitute their multiple and contradictory subjectivities. In addition, postcolonial theory was used to understand how these nuanced subjectivities were constructed in relation to racial and 'ethnic' discourses.

INVESTIGATING THE GENDERED AND RACIALIZED 'HEALTHY' BODY

A few more Black Kate Mosses²⁸ wouldn't be a bad thing. (Critser, 2000, as quoted in Hearndon, 2005, p.135)

Young women, members of minority 'ethnic' and 'racial' backgrounds, and individuals from lower-income localities have been extensively targeted as being 'health risks' due to a perceived lack of physical activity participation that is considered deleterious to their health. Epidemiological studies have employed demographic variables based around categories of gender, class, 'ethnicity', 'race', and age to investigate the 'declining' physical activity participation rates and levels of particular 'subgroups' of young people (Collins et al, 2004; Pate et al., 1994; Romero et al., 2001; Ruadsepp & Vira, 2000; Sallis et al., 1999; Wells, 1996). For instance, Collins et al. (2004) pinpoint 'ethnic' minority populations from lower socio-economic strata as being less regularly active than other groups: 'very few low-income, low-education, ethnic minorities participate in regular, moderate-intensity physical activity, as defined by the U.S. surgeon general' (p.48). The outcome of these epidemiological studies is that young women and individuals from low-income and 'ethnic' minority backgrounds are positioned as deficit and in need of 'saving' through institutional encouragement to increase their physical activity participation.

It has been argued by Nayak that 'the existing sociological literature on youth reveals a distinct lack of engagement with the ethnicities of young, *white* people' (p.25).

²⁸ Kate Moss is a white female supermodel who became immensely popular in the 1990s because of her waif-like body and gaunt facial features.

Because these studies are grounded in ‘racial, class and gender orderings’ (Shim, 2002, p.130) they provide societies with specific notions of ‘difference’ and work to position individuals from specific demographic groups as the gendered or racialized ‘Other’. As such, these studies confer particular meanings and identities about young women and people from low income, urban, and ‘ethnic’ minority populations. This point is made by Shim (2002) who states that:

Rather than being abstract models used only in research, epidemiological theories of how ‘race’, class and sex/gender affect disease distribution permeate other processes of knowledge production, and shape societal conceptions of health, illness, and ‘difference’. As such, epidemiological work on disease incidence and causation have always been sites where racial, class and gender orderings are visible and constitutive. (p.130)

This raises two important questions: How does epidemiological health research come to position the young people in my study as the racialized ‘Other’? In what ways do the young people negotiate the effects of these discourses in order to constitute their ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and diasporic subjectivities? The type of epidemiological research described by Shim is rarely contested and is used by government policy makers, community health programs, and physical education teachers to determine the health and physical activity needs of young people. In particular, physical activity is viewed within Western health policy and education as a crucial component in the construction of a healthy lifestyle. As suggested by Fullagar (2002), within neo-liberal societies emphasizing individual choice and freedom, physical activity is seen as a crucial component in a ‘healthy’ lifestyle. As such, dominant health policy holds individuals responsible for governing their physical activity practices. However, it has been argued that this notion that increased physical activity can be used by individuals to make healthy lifestyle changes is too simplistic because it fails to consider individuals’ social and cultural contexts and how these factors shape the ways young people constitute their racialized or gendered subjectivities. Furthermore, these dominant understandings of health and physical activity fail to engage with the crucial role

that the body plays in negotiating health and physical activity practices. Fullagar (2002) argues that there is a need to interrogate the effects of epidemiological and public health discourses that hold individuals responsible for monitoring and managing their own bodies. In particular, a close analysis of qualitative data becomes necessary to investigate how health discourses work in tandem with broader cultural discourses to produce ‘good’ healthy citizens (Peterson & Lupton, 1996).

From a poststructural perspective, my concerns center on how health discourses work to produce particular ‘truths’ and norms that serve to instill individuals and populations with particular desires, beliefs, and practices that are linked to a sense of deficit around their personal health and physical activity. Several physical education researchers have articulated the ways dominant health discourses work in cultural and institutional settings to (re)produce specific ‘truths’ around the body, health, and fitness (Burrows & Wright, 2004; Evans, 2003; Evans, Rich & Holroyd, 2004; Wright & Burrows, 2004). In particular, this literature seeks to map out the prescriptive health practices that continually work through physical education lessons and curricula to construct particular kinds of subjects and desires (Wright, 2006). According to Wright, much of this body of work involves analyzing students’ interview texts as well as the teachers’ language choices in order to understand how teachers and students come to engage with health discourses. What are of critical import to these studies is the ways the teachers’ and young people’s talk illustrates how the body has become the subject of disciplinary power and comes to be constituted by health and physical activity practices. These scholars have demonstrated that by promoting an individualistic and moralistic concept of health, teachers play a crucial role in (re)producing acceptable notions of health, fitness and particular body ideals which equate health and morality with a slim body shape attained through exercise (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989). Hunter (2005, as found in Wright (2006) argues that this construction of an ‘ideal body’ in the school environment serves to marginalize many young people from physical activity, health, and their bodies. At the same time, through the deployment of ‘truths’ surrounding health and physical activity,

these institutional spaces work to delimit young people's subjectivities. Taken together, this body of physical education work suggests the need to further investigate the ways discourses around health and physical activity work through institutionalized power relations to provide young people with specific relations to their bodies and ways of forming their particular subjectivities.

The literature described above has highlighted the ways knowledge and power work together to produce specific social practices and social relations (Wright, 2006). Specifically, this literature suggests that 'health' discourses play a crucial role in constructing particular notions of the body and forms of subjectivity. Following on, several poststructural researchers have argued that in Western societies, a matrix of fitness, health, and beauty discourses work to (re)produce feminine and masculine ideals of the body (Bordo, 1993; Connell, 1995; Lupton, 1995; Nettleton, 1997). In this literature the discursive construction of feminine bodies has traditionally been the focus of attention. Bordo (1993) and others point to the ways the 'slim' female shape has come to signify the 'healthy' and 'normal' individual. Burns (1993), Markula (1995, 2001), and O'Flynn (2004), for instance, make the claim that the 'passive' and 'slim' body has come to be culturally valued and desired by women. Markula (2001) argues that images of bodies found in fitness magazines play a pivotal role in (re)producing feminine ideals of the body and work to provide young women with specific desires and practices aimed at achieving this body. The literature described above demonstrates that the body acts as a fundamental locus through which both femininity and health are achieved.

Pointing to the different ways that feminine and masculine subjectivities come to be constituted as 'healthy' through the body, White, Young, and Gillett (1995) advance the claim that while the ideal 'healthy' female body is constructed as thin, toned, and not too muscular, the ideal male body is one that is considered to be physically stronger and fat-free. Kirk (1999) also posits that feminine and masculine bodies are socially constructed in divergent ways:

We now have an extensive amount of literature available to us that shows how social values such as being healthy and wealthy, being successful, or being feminine and masculine are ‘articulated’ (Hall, 1985) with images of slender, toned, tanned and youthful female bodies and powerful, tough and capable male bodies (e.g. Kirk & Tinning, 1994; Theberge, 1991; Fitzclarence, 1990; Featherstone, 1982). (p.68)

This quote illustrates how the ideals surrounding male and female bodies are quite different (even as emerging research demonstrates that ‘slim’ bodies are being increasingly coveted by men (see Drummond, 2002; Frost, 2003). These ‘ideal’ male and female bodies come to be imbued with specific cultural meanings such as being ‘healthy’ and ‘successful’. However, this quote also describes how certain bodies come to be afforded more social value and wealth than others because they come to signify middle class modalities of the body (Bourdieu, 1984). I take up this analysis in this chapter to illustrate how the bodies of the urban impoverished and the lower/working classes come to be devalued and become marked as ‘unhealthy’ and ‘undesirable’.

This discussion of literature suggests that intersecting discourses associated with the body, health, beauty, and gender afford individuals with specified ways of making sense of and managing their bodies and enacting ‘healthy’ practices in relation to a range of disciplinary and surveillance techniques. From the perspective that bodies are ‘sites where the inscription of attributes of subjectivity takes place’ (Burns, 1993, p.79), closer inspection is needed to understand the disparate ways that the young men and women in my study engage with, work on, and come to know their bodies in relation to the cultural resources associated with health and physical activity.

Lupton (1997) argues, however, that many of the poststructural researchers working in physical education have only focused upon Foucault’s earlier writings on ‘governmentality’ (1973, 1979) which explored how individuals come to be disciplined and normalized by institutions. These researchers have neglected to

acknowledge the complex ways that individuals actively take up, negotiate, and transform cultural discourses associated with health and the body in order to constitute themselves as subjects. Lupton (1997) argues for using Foucault's later works around governmentality (1986, 1991, 1997a, 1997b) which emphasize how individuals come to govern themselves by engaging with discourse. Drawing upon this later body of work, (2004), Leahy and Harrison (2004), Lupton (1997), O'Flynn (2004), and Wright et al. (2006) critique many existing critical health and physical activity studies for taking up a discourse deterministic position and ignoring the agentic capacity of individuals to constitute their selves and bodies in relation to the dominant healthism discourse. They posit that within these previous studies individuals are often positioned as 'cultural dupes' (Grosz, 1994), and there is rarely any mention of the ways bodies are 'sites of struggle' (Burns, 1993, p.79) and crucially linked to modes of self-production. They suggest that Foucault's analytics of the 'technologies of the self' (1997a) more adequately captures the ways in which young people make choices about and invest themselves in certain bodily practices in order to constitute their subjectivities.

TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF: SEEKING HEALTHY 'PERFECTION' THROUGH SELF-WORK

On one hand, exercise gave me energy and vitality, which I loved. But was I also back in the weight-pumping, carb-counting rat race? It is hard to draw the line between – or even distinguish – where the balance ends and the Balance Bars begin. I want to be fit, energetic and healthy. But I also want to be a body outlaw who coolly rejects the beauty standard and marches to her own chunky, funky beat. I haven't quite mastered that integration. (Edut, 2003, p.vi)

Bingeing and purging became a ritual... I was so obsessed with losing weight that I would wake up as early as 3 o'clock in the morning to run, and then jog again in the afternoon... People ask me how I found the energy to do all this, especially with no food in my stomach. I can only answer that I was so driven to achieve 'perfection' that it wiped out any concern I might have had for my body or my health. (Rodriguez, 2003, p. 192)

The above quotes powerfully illustrate how dominant sets of ‘truths’ related to health and physical activity (re)produce knowledges and practices that have direct material consequences in the lives of young people. These excerpts point to the ways individuals differentially draw upon and engage with health and physical activity discourses in order to ‘master’ or perfect their bodies. By adopting a range of specified eating and exercise practices, it has been argued that individuals in Western societies often work towards a state of health and bodily ‘perfection’, that, as Rodriguez’ quote indicates, may ironically lead to an objectifying and oppositional relation to the body (Grosz, 1994). Another writer describes this particular relationship to the body in much more militaristic tones: ‘(w)e have all been on a dieting tour of duty and gone to battle against our bodies’ (Caines, 2005, p.147).

Foucault (1997c) argues that power relations that are exercised upon the body are not only disciplinary and restrictive, but also exist as a ‘strategic situation’ that produces resistant practices:

We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities of changing the situation. We cannot jump outside the situation, and there is no point where you are freed from all power relations. But you can always change it. (p.167)

Thus these power relations ‘are mobile, they can be modified, they are not fixed once and for all’ (Foucault, 1997b, p.292) and can produce more favorable ways of governing the body. Following this line of inquiry, it becomes necessary to move away from understanding the body simply as being a docile object that is obedient to repressive systems of diet and exercise (Grosz, 1994). Individuals play an active role in resisting dominant power relations in order to understand and ‘work on’ their bodies.

This perspective is taken up by Grosz (1994) who argues that ‘(t)he various procedures for inscribing bodies... are not simply imposed on the individual from outside; they do not function coercively but are sought out. They are commonly undertaken voluntarily and usually require the active compliance of the subject’ (p.143). Furthermore, Grosz advances the claim that adopting certain practices serves to ‘entwine us in various networks of power, but never do they [self-practices] render us merely passive and compliant. They are constitutive of both bodies and subjects’ (p.144). From this perspective, individuals come to engage with their bodies and selves in ways that are conformist, strategic, and even subversive to the discourses around them in order to construct their subjectivities.

As described previously, in Foucault’s later works he moves away from an analysis of how technologies of domination and power work to produce particular subjects and explores the ways individuals come to govern themselves by taking up specific self-body relations. This account of how the self comes to govern itself by taking up certain ‘ethical’ self-forming practices (the ‘technologies of the self’) is useful to understand the ways individuals come to idealize and invest in specific health discourses. Foucault’s (1997a) concept of ‘technologies of the self’ becomes a viable framework from which to understand the psychic practices young people invest in to govern themselves and to work on their bodies.

The concept of ‘technologies of the self’ suggests a means of understanding how the young people in my study strategically refuse normalizing practices associated with the body by taking up different self-forming practices in order to constitute their subjectivities. Drawing from the ‘technologies of the self’ it is possible to understand the complex and subtle ways that the young men and women come to take up divergent and contradictory subjectivities and positions of power through their health engagements. McNay (1992) supports this claim when she argues that ‘Foucault’s work on the self suggests a potential analysis of the differentials of power that exist between and amongst women (and men) through the examination of the various techniques of the self which are employed to order their lives and by which they exert influence on other individuals’ (p.67). From this perspective,

what is of critical import in this chapter are the ways young men and women come to recognize, reflect upon, and make choices around particular knowledges and desires in order to become ‘healthy’ subjects.

IMPACTS OF ‘RACE’ AND ‘ETHNICITY’ IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ‘HEALTHY’ SELF AND BODY

Sure, black women come in all shapes and sizes, but it’s no coincidence that what we call ‘healthy’ is exactly what white America considers the opposite – twenty pounds ‘overweight’ and yes, ‘fat’. (Logwood, 2003, p. 101)

While the ‘technologies of the self’ affords a particular way of understanding how the young people might choose to invest themselves differentially in particular idealized ‘healthy’ subjectivities, this approach has never been used to examine the ways young people from minority ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ backgrounds strategically appropriate and deploy health discourses which (re)produce white middle class practices, attitudes, and values. Existing poststructural research has focused almost exclusively on the experiences of whites and assumes that their behaviors and attitudes are universal to all individuals regardless of ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ backgrounds. This suggests the need for an investigation that focuses on the ways technologies of the self are employed in relation to the specificities of individuals’ ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ backgrounds. This line of inquiry is particularly necessary given the targeting of certain social groups and individuals through the ‘war on obesity’ and their subsequent positioning as ‘second-class citizens’:

For those already marginalized within US culture – including women, people of color, immigrants, working-class and poor people – being fat can be yet one more badge of stigma. If, as many scholars have argued, the idealized citizen is white, male, and middle class and the notion of the ideal citizen is further complicated by Thompson’s suggestion that responsible Americans are those who diet and are thin, then the United States has a growing population of people who fall far outside the confines of ideal citizens. As nightly news reports continue to suggest that the fattest people

in the United States are people of color, immigrants, and members of the lower class, the war against obesity begins to target a specific group of people who are already, in some sense, second-class citizens.

(Hearndon, 2005, p.129)

This quote from Hearndon (2005) illustrates how 'black' women come to understand their selves and bodies as the 'Other' in relation to a white American 'cult of thinness'. Furthermore, in response to their devalued bodies and selves, it has been argued that some 'black' or 'African-American' women actually take up practices associated with attaining the idealized Western female body (Oliver & Lalik, 2004). This view is supported in the following extended quote from Williams (2003):

Lately, I've heard talk that being heavier is supposedly more accepted in the African-American community. Well, if that's the case, then why did I grow up so miserable? Why was I always teased about my weight?... As far as I see it, the whole thing is a myth. Sisters are more accepted if they have big boobs or a big butt, but don't let us get too big or we're classified as undesirable. In my experience, most African Americans define a full-figured woman as somewhere between a size sixteen and a size twenty-two. Anything larger than that is considered fat and is not readily embraced. I'm always hearing from my white sisters that African-American women are more comfortable with our bodies. What I see, however, is that the more we as a people try to assimilate into the mainstream society, the more we embrace the Eurocentric standard of beauty as it's depicted in the media. African Americans are now ridiculing what was once accepted, loved and respected within our communities. Our 'Big Mamas' – mothers, sisters and aunts – were once considered women of beauty and strength. Today, they're a source of embarrassment, the object of cruel remarks and constant harassment about their weight. (p.183)

However, while the quote above demonstrates that some African-American women have come to 'embrace' white standards of beauty and health as read off the body, it has also been argued that African-American women sometimes desire to attain a body shape, size, and weight that is considered 'fat' by white standards of health and beauty (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004; Shaw, 2005). This suggests that the meanings African-American women associate with maintaining the body through eating and exercise practices differs from their white counterparts. This claim is supported by the following extended quote from Logwood (2003):

Funny, as the pounds came off, my family began to worry that I was unhealthy. Their main concern was that I 'wasn't eating right'... Black people have a way of discussing weight, I've noticed, as a metaphor for well-being. For us, 'You're so thin' often translates into 'Are you okay?' Thinness doesn't always imply privilege or that we have leisure time on our hands to work out and obsess over calories. Usually, it's taken as a telltale sign of a sister who's over-worked, burdened, burning out – someone who's not quite holding it all together. Even in the fitness-crazed '90's, the sight of a thin black woman still invokes a lot of questioning. (p.101)

The contradictory ways that the African-American women described above come to engage with their bodies in relation to ideals of beauty and health leads to the question raised by Logwood (2003): 'But what, really, is a healthy African-American body?' (p.101). Furthermore, the contradictory meanings associated with the racialized 'healthy' body suggests that individuals within minority 'ethnic' and 'racial' communities come to exist as 'split, divided' and take up subjectivities that are 'fragile and plural' (Young, 1990). This points to the need for an investigation into the 'different versions of blackness' (Nayak, 2003, p.126) that are invoked by men and women from African-American, 'mixed race', and 'black' 'ethnic' backgrounds (such as Haitian and African immigrants). Finally, the extensive commentary above only engages with the experiences of adult African-Americans. This suggests the need to investigate the ways *young* people from 'black' or African-American backgrounds come to take up meanings of

health around their racialized bodies. To achieve these aims, I draw from the concept of the ‘technologies of the self’ because it affords a particular way of understanding the self-forming practices by which individuals appropriate and/or resist certain elements of the dominant Western healthism culture, whilst also engaging with often contradictory bodily discourses available to them through their own differentiated ‘black’ communities (George, 2004).

EATING AND EXERCISE: YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONSTRUCTIONS OF HEALTHY PRACTICES

... a healthy appearance now testifies to internal goodness. (Jutel, 2005, p.120)

In this section I draw from the ‘health’ interviews to investigate the ways young people in my study engage with the meanings/understandings of health and the body in order to define and ‘attain the status of a healthy person’ (Wright and Burrows, 2004, p.212). My analysis is shaped by the Foucauldian concept of ‘governmentality’. As outlined in Chapter Two, this notion involves investigating the interactions between ‘technologies of power’, ‘which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends of domination’ (Foucault, 1997a, p.225) and ‘technologies of the self’, ‘the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself (sic)’ (p.225). In Foucauldian terms, this section describes how specific disciplinary practices related to health have been internalized and exercised by the young people, leading to particular ways of being and thinking as ‘healthy’ subjects. In this section, the analysis focuses upon how the size, weight, and physical capacity of the body are the means by which health is defined and measured by the young people. Following this line of inquiry, I map out how the young people’s talk about health illustrates the ways bodily appearance comes to be integrally connected to a ‘moral obligation’ to exercise and eat in prescribed ways (Jutel, 2005, p.119).

This analysis is derived from two interviews that were conducted with each study participant. Questions were asked along the lines of what it means to be healthy, what a healthy person looks or acts like, and whether healthiness is a desirable

state. Additionally, the young people were asked to describe what they found to be unhealthy, what unhealthy people looked and acted like, whether or not they wanted to be unhealthy (as they understood the concept) and also what their various sources of health information were. To engage in discussions surrounding 'healthy' bodies I also brought out pictures of various body types, which included several differently shaped and sized young men and women engaged in physical activity and sport. I also asked the participants to rate themselves on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the unhealthiest) to investigate the degree to which young people felt that they were healthy or unhealthy and to prompt discussions about why this might be so.

In the ensuing discussion I provide evidence that in the beginning of the initial health interview the young people provided responses and discussions which were often very similar. In the later stages of the first interviews and in the second interviews their descriptions of 'health' and 'unhealthiness' became much more complex and contradictory. These later exchanges illustrate more explicitly the ways discourses around health intersect with broader cultural discourses of 'race' and gender, and as such provide insights into how practices are taken up differently by young men and young women. These more sophisticated responses will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter.

To begin to understand the ways the young people constructed their meanings of health, I opened the interviews with broad and open-ended questions such as 'What does health mean to you?', 'How do you think you can keep yourself healthy?', and 'How is health a part of your life, as you've described health?' In response, the overwhelming majority of young men and young women consistently described 'healthiness' in terms of eating and exercising properly. This understanding of health as related to eating and exercise practices became even more evident when questions around health were framed in the negative, as in 'What does it mean to be *unhealthy*?' All of the participants described unhealthiness as the direct result of eating improperly (eating too much or the wrong foods). This included references to binge eating behaviors, not sharing

with others who were hungry, and consuming greasy foods like potato chips and hamburgers, and candy. The belief that eating was a key component of health was often manifested in negative directives made by the young people such as ‘don’t eat so much junk food’ or ‘don’t drink soda.’ In addition, physical activity directives were commonly offered, such as ‘work out in the gym’, ‘stretch out before exercising’, ‘pump weights, eat right’ and ‘run around the corner’. Perceptions of ‘unhealthiness’ seemed to be very similar amongst the participants, regardless of ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and diasporic background, physical activity history, or gender of the respondent.

This understanding of ‘health’ and ‘unhealthiness’ which is linked to prescribed eating and exercise practices parallels descriptions offered in a New Zealand study, the ‘National Educational Monitoring Project’, of 2880 year four and year eight students (Burrows & Wright, 2004; Burrows, Wright & Smith, 2002; Wright & Burrows, 2004) and those found in Wright et al.’s (2006) longitudinal study of 39 young men and 45 young women in several Australian high schools. The comments that are constantly reiterated indicate that the ‘healthism’ discourse (Crawford, 1980), which equates health with specified practices of eating and exercise, has great currency with these young people.

In their interviews, the young people consistently mentioned the word ‘fat’ and the repeatedly invoked the ‘couch potato’ metaphor. Similar to the young people found in the studies mentioned above, the young people in my study took up a ‘moralistic position around health’ whereby those who were unable or unwilling to maintain a ‘thin’ body shape were considered to be ‘unworthy, lazy’ and ultimately a ‘couch potato’ (Burrows et al., 2002, p.46). According to the young people, a person’s ability to adhere to healthy practices is manifest in their bodily appearance. ‘Fat’ people were considered to be unhealthy and lacking the self-control and/or motivation to eat right and to take part in ‘informal’ or institutional physical activities – a primary theme that continues to circulate in their talk around health and bodies is captured in the metaphor of the ‘couch potato’. A person’s larger or ‘fat’ body was integrally linked with them having a ‘lazy’ or

‘greedy’ attitude and taking up sedentary behaviors such as sitting on the couch, watching TV all day, and playing video games. Within this circular relationship, ‘fat’ comes to signify one’s moral laxity as well as their investments in (unhealthy) sedentary behaviors. In this way, the body was understood as portraying ‘the virtuous health of the self’ (Jutel, 2005, p.119). Bill, a promising 14 year old African-American football player (who works out with a personal strength and speed enhancement trainer), made comments that were indicative of this perspective:

- Matt: Um, what do you think a person who’s a ‘one’ (on a scale of 1-10, with ‘one’ being the unhealthiest) would be like? Who is, I guess, the unhealthiest person?
- Bill: Fat, sit on the couch all day, drinking soda, no water or milk, watching TV or playing video games all day.

The consistency with which the young people read unhealthiness from the appearance of the ‘fat’ body becomes more evident in the following exchange with two young women, Sasha, an 18 year old African-American/Cherokee Native American dancer, and her sister Monet, a 14 year old basketball player and cheerleader. Their comments crystallize the notion that the ‘couch potato’ or ‘fat person sitting on the couch’ is the primary signifier of unhealthiness for the young people in my study. The young women also talked about unhealthy people lacking the self-control or ability to improve their health by choosing healthier alternatives. Evans et al. (2004) suggest that this type of health talk is indicative of the ‘blame the victim’ culture surrounding ‘health’ and ‘fatness’ (p.135). The young women (re)produce a ‘discourse of certainty about exercise, food and diet’ (p.135) in condemning ‘fat’ people for not choosing the ‘right’ foods or working out ‘correctly’. In the next quote, Sasha and Monet demonstrate how ‘fat’ bodies have come to be socially devalued in relation to the ‘certainty’ of the exercise-food-diet constellation that has currency in the Western healthism discourse.

From Sasha and Monet:

- Matt: What do you think a 'one' would be like?
Sasha: Probably eat anything and everything and not just that, but would be a couch potato, even if you do eat a lot, if you work out occasionally, that will move you down the scale [and improve your health]...
Matt: Monet, what do you think?
Monet: Yeah, like a fat person sitting on the couch, eating a whole bag of chips, not walking anywhere, or going anywhere, never does anything.

Monet further noted that there were healthier eating alternatives 'like rice cakes instead of a bag of Doritos' and other 'healthier' foods that could be discerned by their nutrition labels – people just needed to put the effort into finding these items. Sasha commented that unhealthy people lacked the control to choose things like carrots instead of a box of ice cream. As noted by Lupton (1996), popular and medical health discourses have classified particular foods as being either 'good' or 'bad' – thus, eating certain foods serves to imbue individuals with a particular moral valuation that is often determined by the dominant cultural groups. The young women's comments associated with eating suggest that they have assigned moral value to certain foods. 'Fat' people who eat Doritos and ice cream lack the moral fortitude to eat 'healthier' and 'work out' on a regular basis.

To further engage with the ways specific eating and exercise practices are imbued with a sense of certainty and moral valuation, I turn to commentary from Adam, a talented 15 year old African-American basketball player. Similar to Bill, Monet, and Sasha, Adam equates unhealthiness with a sedentary lifestyle and poor eating practices. He also links 'unhealthy' people with the same metaphor of the 'couch'. Again, his comments suggest a circular relationship whereby 'unhealthy' people take up the wrong behaviors and attitudes (they just 'sit there', they are 'lazy', eat the 'bad' foods) which can be read in their appearance ('fat'). In the following exchange Adam constructs meanings about health which are tied to moral judgments about other people. Adam considers 'fat' people to be 'lazy' because they don't 'get up and do something' such as working out, even though

people are telling them to. This illustrates the ways Adam constructs health in relation to a social imperative – Adam tells those who are ‘unhealthy’ to be physically active instead of ‘watching TV’ and ‘sitting on the couch’. Those who ignore this advice are considered to be even lazier because they ‘know’ what they are supposed to do, yet lack the moral fortitude, self-discipline or work ethic to change their sedentary behaviors. As I demonstrate later, young men such as Adam and Bill have become invested arbiters of health information due to their immersion in organized sport. Bill, for instance, describes himself as a ‘role model’ of health because he encourages younger wrestlers to eat carrots and fruit instead of ‘junk food’. These two young men equate the management of their own health and even the health of their peers through eating and exercising ‘properly’ with the ability to perform in sports such as basketball, wrestling, and football.

From Adam:

- Matt: When you think about a person that’s a ‘one’, what do you think a ‘one’ would be like?
- Adam: Sitting on the couch, eating junk food, watching TV, just really lazy, everybody telling them to get up and do something, work out or something, just like to sit there and watch TV.

There is a strong moral element to the kind of talk articulated by Adam and Bill. It is not just that ‘unhealthy’ people participate in ‘unhealthy’ behaviors, but also that they fail to heed the advice that is given to them by ‘healthy’ young people such as themselves – Bill considered himself to be an ‘8’ of health, while Adam rated himself as a ‘10’. In (re)producing health knowledge encompassing exercise, food, and diet (Evans et al., 2004), they are also making a moral judgment surrounding one’s ability to take up this knowledge in order to work on the body and become ‘healthy’ people. In so doing, these two young men are (re)producing the popular assumption that (health) ‘knowledge changes attitude, which in turn changes behaviour’ (Wright & Burrows, 2004, p.215). From this position they go on to take up a position around health whereby ‘fat’ individuals

are considered to be 'lazy' because they are lacking in moral 'fortitude' and 'not willing to commit to change or to the dictates of healthy living' (Murray, 2005, p.155). Subsequently, for these young men who view themselves as being extremely 'healthy', the 'fat' body comes to signify 'a failed body project' (p.155).

Crucial to the ways the young people link 'fat' bodies with 'immoral' attitudes and practices is the understanding that health is determined by the ability of a person to mind one's own body – 'an exemplary technology of the self' as noted by Leahy and Harrison (2004, p.133) – in ways that have been prescribed by the wider neo-liberal 'healthism' culture. The young people's comments suggest that the Western 'healthism' culture comes to be learned, taken up and instantiated within young people and their peer cultures (Evans et al., 2004). Furthermore, an intrinsic belief within this 'healthism' culture is the notion that knowledge and characteristics associated with 'healthiness' and 'unhealthiness' can indeed be determined through the size, shape, and exercise capacity of the body. Murray (2005) addresses this issue in the following extended quote:

It is not a revelatory declaration to say that, in the West, we exist in a culture of a negative collective of 'knowingness' about fat bodies. As members of Western society, we presume we know the histories of all fat bodies... we believe we know their desires (which must be out of control) and their will (which must be weak). This constant 'silent presumption' in knowing certain bodies reifies the culture of knowingness. We read a fat body on the street and believe we 'know' its 'truth'. (p.154)

This argument is powerful because it suggests that the young people, who were recruited based on their involvement in some form of physical activity, take up positions around health whereby they presume an ability to define and judge health through the bodies of 'fat' people. Their immersion in various forms of physical activity informs how these young people constitute themselves as 'healthy' subjects (all of them considered themselves to be at least a '5' or above)

by making moral judgments about the ‘unhealthy’ ‘fat’ people around them. From this understanding I turn to a more specific investigation into the complex and subtle ways that the young women come to understand the ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ bodies of themselves and their peers in order to derive particular meanings about their own subjectivities.

‘FEAR AND LOATHING’: THE GENDERED AND RACIALIZED ‘ABJECT BODY’

Earlier I contended that the young women were able to (re)produce the dominant health imperatives which were linked to specific eating and exercising practices with a great deal of fluency. However, their comments also suggest that they conceptualized a more complex way of engaging with their bodies in order to constitute themselves as ‘healthy’ subjects. Often the young women constructed their ‘healthy’ subjectivities by monitoring and comparing the bodies and health practices of other young women. While most of the young men depicted ‘fat’ people as being ‘lazy’ or unmotivated to participate in physical activity, several of young women often viscerally described ‘overweight’ individuals and their ‘fat’ bodies as being physically repulsive. These descriptions suggest that these young women construct their subject-positions through the constitution of an ‘abject’ other (Grosz, 1994; Kristeva, 1982; Young, 1990).

The concept of the ‘abject body’ affords a way of looking into how health discourses provides the young people with particular eating and exercise practices aimed at the achievement of ‘fit’ and ‘healthy’ bodies. Young (1990), with recourse to Kristeva’s (1982) psychoanalytical concept of ‘abjection’, explores how the subject comes to exist by constructing an undesirable ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ ‘other’. Young (1990) describes ‘abjection’ as ‘the feeling of loathing and disgust the subject has in encountering certain matter, images, and fantasies – the horrible, to which it can only respond with aversion, with nausea and distraction’ (p.143). Furthermore, ‘(t)he subject reacts to this abject with loathing as the means of restoring the border separating self and other’ (Young, 1990, p.145). This unconscious aversion becomes socially manifest when abject matter becomes linked with certain social and cultural groups. In this account of abjection

‘(b)lacks, Latinos, Asians, gays and lesbians, old people, disabled people and often poor people, experience nervousness or avoidance from others’ and come to ‘occupy a similar status as despised, ugly, or fearful bodies, as a crucial element of their oppression’ (Young, 1990, p.142). The bodies of ‘black’ women, in particular, are encoded within Western societies as being passive, unattractive, overweight, and hyper-sexual and thus ‘situated beyond the outskirts of normative boundaries’ (p.151). As Williams (2003) comments ‘(I)’m a fat black woman. I’m all of the things that society dumps on’ (p.186). Young (1990) argues that by abjecting the ‘fat’ bodies of ‘black’ women, ‘privileged groups’ come to construct their ‘normalized’ sense of self.

In her investigation of health discourses, O’Flynn (2004) describes how abject bodies are considered to be ‘unethical, self-indulgent and immoral’ (p.64) and needing to be ‘controlled or fixed through an individual’s vigilant investment into “health” practices’ (p.64). The overweight body shape or size ‘suggests that an individual has deviated from the norm because of his/her own lack of investment into “correct” health practices’ (p.64). In this chapter I pull together these moralistic understandings of ‘unhealthy’ and ‘racialized’ abject bodies in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the young women came to exist as subjects. In the following exchanges, Sara and Maureen describe feelings of abhorrence and derision towards those whose bodies were considered ‘unhealthy’ because they were physically larger. I use their talk around bodies as a starting point from which to analyze the ways ‘racial’ minority and ‘ethnic’ young women in my study came to take up pluralized and nuanced subjectivities. As mentioned previously, *every member* of the research study considered themselves to be ‘healthy’. Yet, what becomes evident through the interrogation of the following interview texts is that the young women drew upon their specific understandings of their own and others’ bodies in order to constitute themselves as ‘healthy’ in quite different ways from each other. Here Maureen, an 18 year old Haitian young woman who participated in track and dancing, describes how ‘overweight’ people are ‘nasty’:

- Matt: What would a 'one' be like on the scale, say 'one' being unhealthiest, and, yeah, would you want to be a 'one?'
- Maureen: No, I wouldn't want to be a 'one,' because I wouldn't want to be an overweight person, because you know how people just overweight, they don't care, they eat anything, and they eat fast food, and they usually don't care how their body looks like, that's just nasty.

Another Haitian young woman, Irene, made similar comments about her distaste of 'fat' bodies and idealized those on the popular television program 'America's Next Top Model'. Furthermore, Maureen's depictions of 'overweight' people who 'don't care what they eat' and 'what their body looks like' are similar to those provided by Sara, a 16 year old French-Canadian/Hispanic girl who dances and plays volleyball and has a very thin and toned body that would fit within the white feminine body ideal. In the following exchange, Sara describes those who she considers to be unhealthy because they are 'bigger':

- Matt: Go ahead, go ahead and explore [what an unhealthy person looks like] a bit more.
- Sara: I don't know (laughs) kind of like... I don't know... just kind of... I don't know, people in my sense who would be bigger... I don't know, it's terrible! (laughs).
- Matt: It's fine, you can say what you want to.
- Sara: I don't know, I guess a little bigger, like maybe stomach hangs over their pants or their arms are really big, and... I don't know... (laughs) I just feel bad, picking some poor person apart! I don't know, I think that's kind of my idea, of someone who isn't exactly fit.

Sara links unhealthy people with particular types of abject bodies – she specifically points out that the 'stomach hangs over their pants or their arms are really big'. This is likely to be a reference to the practice of abjecting larger 'black' female bodies. Through my observations I have noticed that the 'black' young women at Thompson High School often wear short tank tops that display the flesh of the stomach and the arms. The comments made by all three 'racial' or 'ethnic' minority women above indicates that they closely align themselves with white middle class health and body ideals in order to constitute themselves as 'non-black' or 'non-African-American' females.

The two ‘black’ Haitian young women expressed their displeasure of fatness in much more explicit terms than their African-American counterparts. Through my reading of the interviews it became clear that the only young women who articulated an acceptance of larger bodies and expressed concerns about ‘skinny’ bodies were the two young African-American sisters, Monet and Sasha. In the following excerpt these two young women talk about ‘healthy’ bodies and practices in very different ways than the three women discussed previously.

- Matt: Do you think Monet... it seems that you are articulating that people can be healthy at different weights?
- Monet: Yeah, somebody could be really healthy but not really muscular, but you couldn't tell because somebody who is a '3' could be unhealthy because they starve themselves, but that's how the world is today, that person could be unhealthy because they starve themselves, or someone who is muscular could be unhealthy because they over work themselves.
- Matt: So explain staying thin and skinny in terms of healthy...
- Monet: I'd say that it doesn't really matter because just because you're skinny doesn't mean you're healthy...
- Matt: Sasha, how do you feel?
- Sasha: I know a lot of skinny people who are healthy, eat healthy, but I know a lot of people who are average size and eat healthy, but some people starve themselves, and some people have a high metabolism that could eat whatever they want when they want so they're unhealthy that way, and there are people who you can't really judge how they are, and you have to measure all aspects of their life.

Sasha and Monet are physically much larger than Sara, Maureen, and Irene. While they earlier made comments about ‘fat’ people and ‘couch potatoes’, I argue that they have also come to be ‘marginalized’ because of their seemingly ‘fat black female bodies’ (Shaw, 2005). This suggests that individuals can take up contradictory and shifting positions in relation to health discourses. Sara, Maureen, and Irene escape this disavowed positioning because their ‘thin’ or ‘stronger’ bodies provide them with a more valued form of ‘physical capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984). Sasha and Monet both participated in dance-type activities such as cheerleading and modern dancing, where maintaining a slim and ‘healthy’

body size and shape would be especially powerful imperatives. Yet, in the previous excerpt they seem to articulate a position where ‘skinny bodies’ are equated with ‘unhealthiness’ (e.g. ‘some people starve themselves... so they’re unhealthy that way’). While these two young women who identified themselves as ‘black’ and African-American were most explicit about their concerns around ‘skinny bodies’ that were linked to ‘unhealthy’ practices, other African-American young women seemed to be similarly skeptical about the need to attain a ‘slim’ body. As I argue later in this chapter, the ‘black’ or ‘African-American’ young women seem to equate practices associated with the achievement of ‘slim’ bodies with a white middle class culture of health. As such, they use the abjection of ‘slim’ white female bodies and their desires for physical strength as a way of constituting their ‘black’ subjectivities.

In contrast, I contend that both Irene and Maureen take up positions around what is most likely an ‘unhealthy’ and ‘nasty’ ‘black’ or ‘African-American’ female body in order to construct their selves as ‘non-black’ or ‘non-African-American’. In other interviews, both these young women made clear their distaste for ‘black’ or ‘African-American’ culture, which they associate with trouble-making and lewd behavior. For instance, Irene once commented that:

Then the park (voice raising) is where you see all the not crackheads, but, it’s just you see all the black people acting up doing whatever and stuff... like smoke weed and all that stuff and, doin’ that act like ‘crackheads’ that’s what I call them.

I suggest that the ways in which Irene and Maureen come to consider larger ‘black’ female bodies to be ‘nasty’ and ‘undesirable’ troubles the widely-held assumption that ‘black’ people are somehow more tolerant of a larger body size. Their comments disrupt the notion of unifying identity categories such as ‘black’ and point to the ways that ‘blackness’ is taken up in different ways by diasporic young women, compared to their African-American counterparts. It is clear that both Maureen and Sara abject ‘fat’ and ‘black’ female bodies around them in order to align themselves to the interconnected Western ideals of health, beauty,

and femininity. Sara, in particular, is easily able to abject 'black' bodies in order to assume a subjectivity of 'whiteness' because of her light skin complexion, 'slim' body, and French-Canadian/Hispanic background. However, I will argue later that while the comments from Maureen speaks to her desire not to be 'black' or African-American and demonstrates the powerful impacts of white middle class discourses upon her self understanding, she also took up certain self-body relations that were used to construct her subjectivity as 'non-white'.

Fullagar (2002) argues that a common outcome of health imperatives is 'a relation of continuous self-scrutiny, dissatisfaction and critical evaluation, through which the body can be positioned as the object of a measure of self-loathing' (p.79-80). So how might the abjection of others' bodies also involve the internalization of 'self-surveillance' and 'self-loathing' within these women? Kristeva (1982) and Young (1990) argue that the abject (in this case 'black' body fat) is close enough to the subject to be differentiated and refused, yet close enough to attract and fascinate, even as it is reacted to aversively. In the later sections I explore whether young women such as Irene and Maureen take up eating and exercise practices that involve 'self-scrutiny', 'self-loathing' and 'dissatisfaction' with their bodies. Of critical import is to understand whether or not these young women take up these practices in order to avoid becoming the abject 'fat black female' (Shaw, 2005).

'PUT THAT MEAT ON ME SO IT CAN TURN INTO MUSCLE': THE YOUNG WOMEN'S DESIRE FOR A STRONG BODY

Many of the comments from the African-American and Haitian women indicate a desire to construct a particular 'healthy' body that is linked with the attainment of physical strength. In their talk about 'health' they articulate that a 'healthy' body was strong and not the 'thin' body desired by the white middle class culture of health. By distinguishing themselves from 'whiteness' I contend that these young women came to understand their pluralized and nuanced 'black' African-American or 'ethnic' subjectivities. Yet, what is of critical import is that while they often expressed their desire to attain a physically strong body, they did not want to govern their selves and bodies in ways advocated by their coaches and

peers. Instead, the young women's comments indicate a relationship around both exercise and eating that is based around practices of pleasure. I will argue later that their desire for more relaxed and sensual approaches to eating and 'working out' affords them with a distinctive subject position in relation to their white female counterparts found in other studies. According to Bartky (1988), Bordo (1993), and Wright et al. (2006), young white women often take up disciplinary body practices congruent with 'at risk' health discourses and dominant constructions of the 'thin' feminine body. Furthermore, the young women's health practices diverged considerably from those taken up by the young 'black' men in my study. I argue later that the young 'black' men in my study desire to attain a strong masculine body that is linked to a nexus of neo-liberal discourses associated with poverty, health, and sport.

For Irene and Maureen, having a 'fit' body was linked with having a strong body that was devoid of fat. As outlined previously, the Haitian females used the 'abjection' of fat in order to construct their diasporic subjectivities. Their desire to avoid being 'fat' coheres with the responses found in most qualitative health and physical activity studies involving predominantly white young women (Burrows et al., 2002; Garrett, 2004; O'Flynn, 2004; Wright & Burrows, 2004). Garrett (2004), for instance, notes that a prevalent theme in her study of white, middle-class Australian females was that a 'good' body was one that was not too big or fat. In comparison, some of the young women in my study desired to construct a 'healthy' body based around physical strength. In comparison to the Haitian women, the African-American women also desired a strong body, yet they were much more accepting of body 'fat'. This again points to the nuanced differences of health construction that exist between and amongst the 'black' African-American and Haitian young women. This argument begins to emerge in the following excerpts from the interviews with Sharon, an 18 year old African-American track runner and basketball player. Like many of the young people in my study, she previously had linked 'health' with being 'in shape'. During her health interview I asked Sharon if she valued 'staying in shape'. Initially she makes the point that her coaches do not want her to be 'in shape' (i.e. 'thin'), they

want her to gain weight to ‘turn into muscle’. To do this they want her to adopt certain ‘healthy’ eating practices (i.e. not eating ‘fried food’) in order to increase muscle mass and thus improve her performances. She, however, comments with some enthusiasm that she goes against their wishes and eats fried chicken.

From Sharon:

- Matt: [Do you think about] staying in shape and stuff like that?
Sharon: No, I’m supposed to be gaining weight, my coaches want me to gain weight, put that meat on me so it can turn into muscle, I’m not supposed to be big, but I need to gain at least 15 pounds.
Matt: Why is that important to track?
Sharon: More muscle, I’ll be stronger.
Matt: How do you feel about that?
Sharon: I want to gain weight, I don’t know if my metabolism is high or low, but every time I eat, it doesn’t affect me.
Matt: What kinds of food do you eat?
Sharon: I eat everything, junk food, liver, everything
Matt: Tell me something you eat
Sharon: Chicken
Matt: Fried chicken?
Sharon: Yeah, my coach will be like ‘Don’t eat any fried food’ then I go home and eat some, he’s like ‘Eat healthy’, then I’ll eat what I want, I weigh 126 instead of 120, I was happy, I went to the clinic to get my physical, and I was like ‘Please let me weigh some more’, and then she said 126, I started screaming! I was glad to gain some weight, I weigh more than Michael Jackson.

Later in the interview:

- Matt: You like to eat?
Sharon: Yeah, I can eat a lot! (laughs) I have to gain more weight, I feel bad about people that try to lose weight, but then I’m trying to gain weight.

The way Sharon acknowledges and even embraces the practices around *gaining* weight diverges from the responses about eating and managing the body found in studies of white young women (Burrows et al., 2002; Garrett, 2004; O’Flynn, 2004; Wright & Burrows, 2004). Even the very physically active women in these studies primarily wanted to lose weight, rather than to accrue it. What comes

through Sharon's comments is that she wants to weigh more and develop more muscle mass because she feels that this type of body is necessary for sport. I would also argue that the ways she conceptualizes constructing a heavier and stronger body is made in comparison to 'thin' people or those 'people trying to lose weight'. Crucially, she earlier made reference that she became happy when she realized that she weighed 'more than Michael Jackson'. It has been argued that Michael Jackson powerfully signifies a white feminine body ideal in the American popular imagination (Jefferson, 2006). As one woman comments "'(M)J" [Michael Jackson] is still very unhappy in his personal and physical identity as an African-American man. He seems to have transformed [himself]... an African-American man, into... a European-American woman' (Valkyrie, 2004, p.5). By deploying this reference to Michael Jackson, who is often linked with having a white feminine body, it seems that the way Sharon takes up particular eating practices and modalities of developing a stronger and heavier body is made by contrasting herself with the eating and bodily practices of white middle class females. This argument becomes more evident through the following quote in which Sharon considers the white females who she encounters in cross country running as being too 'whitey'. She links them with the 'thin' white young women found in the cheerleading movie 'Bring It On' (Bendinger, 2000):

- Matt: What about when you run [cross country], what do you wear?
 Sharon: We have to wear our uniforms, we don't do what our school does, like put ribbons in our hair, like 'whitey' (laughs).
 Matt: Whitey?
 Sharon: Yeah, all the girls, have little ribbons in their hair, we don't do that.
 Matt: So what's too 'whitey'?
 Sharon: Have you seen [the movie] 'Bring it On'?
 Matt: Cheerleading?
 Sharon: Yeah, cheery, California girls who all run swinging their ponytails (laughs)... Yeah, as long as we win the race [is most important].

As noted in two internet reviews, the movie 'Bring it On' follows the story of a white cheerleading group, 'set in that richest and blondest of countries, San Diego' (Edelstein, 2000, p.2), which is led by 'a rich blonde white girl'

(Engelhardt, 2001, p.3-4). Both images of the white cheerleader and Michael Jackson powerfully signify white femininity in the form of a 'thin' body. In particular, it is the image of the 'whitey' female cheerleader manifest in the cross country runners that Sharon recognizes as embodying a suburban white middle class habitus (Bourdieu, 1978, 194). In order to distinguish herself from being 'whitey', it seems that Sharon forms a particular relation to her body by instead drawing from African-American cultural discursive resources that are sometimes considered to be more accepting of a heavier female body and eating higher calorie foods (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004; Logwood, 2003; Williams, 2003). Yet, at the same time, her understanding of the body is still quite instrumentalist – eating more and gaining weight are practices aimed at developing a strong body that is useful for sprinting. She does not want to be like the frivolous 'whitey' girls whom she feels just want to look good and be 'cheery' in sport, so she eats 'fried food' in order to gain weight which she thinks will eventually turn into muscle. Her pleasure in gaining weight is not that she will get 'fat', but that her weight can be converted into muscle which will allow her to be a better athlete than her 'thin' white counterparts.

A different version of the 'a strong body is healthy' viewpoint is provided by the Haitian young women. As indicated in the previous section, the two Haitian women constructed their 'black' 'ethnic' subjectivities around the abjection of 'fat' bodies. In the following extended passage, Irene articulates her desire for a muscular body that is also devoid of excess fat. She abjects the fat within her own body in order to take up a 'black' 'ethnic' subject-position that is distinct from African-American culture. While Sharon enacts a much more tolerant position towards gaining weight, Irene is much more adamant about the need to lose weight and avoid 'fatness'. In the following quote she advances the claim that health can be read off the body – defined muscles are a sign of healthiness, whereas 'flab' and 'baby fat' is both undesirable in appearance and indicative of being out of shape:

Matt: I think this is probably the last question, so when you look at these people here (pointing to pictures of male and female athletes), do you think that you can tell if someone is healthy by looking at them?

Irene: Yes and no at the same time... I don't know, by the way their bodies look, their physical outside appearance is healthy, to my eyes it's healthy, but it's like you never know... until you talk to them about that, but, they look pretty healthy to me, they got the packs²⁹, whatever...

Matt: The what?

Irene: The packs... for the guys and the young women they got muscles pretty strong and stuff...

Matt: Would you want to look like one of these people here?

Irene: Yeah.

Matt: Why?

Irene: Because, I just like the way they look. I want to be her or her (points to two white muscular female athletes posing in a sports magazine).

Matt: How come?

Irene: I don't know, I just like the way they look for some reason... I don't like having fat (chuckles) in my body.

Matt: Yeah?

Irene: I mean, they got fat, but it's like a small percentage. But, it's cool, I ain't tripping³⁰, though...

In another interview Irene talks about doing sit ups to lose body fat:

Matt: What made you feel like you wanted to [do sit ups] yesterday?

Irene: In case I do track, and I guess build up some muscle, I like to stay in shape

Matt: What do you mean stay in shape?

Irene: Can't get too flabby, I got to lose my baby fat, that's about it, I might lose a lot of weight, depends on how hard I work out, cause I got to work out, probably not that much.

Matt: Is that important to you?

Irene: I got to lose my baby fat, that's about it.

Further in the interview

Matt: Do you like to lift weights? When you lift weights what are you thinking about?

²⁹ 'Packs' refers to 'six packs', which is a chiseled set of abdominal muscles.

³⁰ 'Tripping' means to get upset about something.

Irene: Getting... I'm trying to get bigger (laughs). So I can have more cuts³¹ instead of fat.

While Sharon and Irene share a similar body size and shape, they come to idealize different kinds of bodies. In contrast to Sharon's idealization of a heavier and stronger body that is constructed by eating more, Irene's longing for a physically strong body (here comprised of chiseled abdominal muscles) is made in relation to her desire 'to lose a lot of weight' (e.g. 'I don't like having fat in my body' and 'I got to lose my baby fat').

Both Sharon and Irene simultaneously engage with the dominant healthism discourse as well as their particular cultural, 'racial', and 'ethnic' backgrounds in order to take up their distinctive 'healthy' subject-positions. Sharon desires to gain more weight by engaging in practices such as eating more 'fried food' in order to construct a larger and stronger body that is useful in sport. Her desire to attain this type of physically powerful and competitive body is constituted by contrasting herself with white modalities of femininity and the body. I argue that through her comments surrounding the 'thin' Michael Jackson who embodies Eurocentric notions of femininity and beauty, and the 'whitey' female cheerleaders and cross country runners, Sharon comes to constitute herself as 'black' by developing a body that is physically strong and capable.

In comparison, the analysis at this point suggests that the Haitian young women constitute their 'black' subjectivities by distancing themselves from African-American culture. For instance, Irene idealizes the strong, fat-free, and white female bodies that she sees in the magazine photos. Abjection of the 'fat black female body' (Shaw, 2005) becomes a powerful technique which is employed by these women to exist as 'black' 'ethnic' women living in an African-American neighborhood. Simultaneously, they appropriate and refashion white middle class health values and practices surrounding the body. Yet, it is not through constant work on her body that Irene comes to exist as a 'black' 'ethnic' subject, but rather

³¹ 'Cuts' refers to 'cut' or defined muscles.

it is the monitoring and abjection of her own and others' 'fat' and 'flab' that becomes her primary self-forming practice. By monitoring 'fat' in her own body *and* abjecting the bodies of 'fat' African-American females, I argue that Irene is able to take up a 'black' 'ethnic' subject-position by drawing from 'whiteness' whilst distancing herself from African-American culture. At the same time, she also fails to take up the white middle class values and disciplinary practices associated with the construction of a 'thin' feminine body – her attitude towards working out is quite nonchalant (i.e. 'it's cool, I ain't trippin'). While she seems to share white middle class anxieties around 'fat' bodies, it is not a 'thin' white body that she desires, but rather a 'strong' body that is also desired by African-American young women such as Sharon.

The claims made above support the argument that the minority 'racial' and 'ethnic' backgrounds of these young women crucially shapes their desires to attain a 'healthy' status that diverges from the Western norm. Wright et al. (2006) point out that 'it is not simply knowledge that is socially constituted, but also the desire to be the kind of person idealized by a particular discourse. The discourse, in turn, provides instructions on the ways to become the desired ideal' (p.7). I argue that the nuanced 'black' backgrounds of these young women worked to imbue them with certain desires through which they came to engage with the 'health' knowledge and practices made available to them and subsequently came to govern their selves and bodies in differential ways from Western society as well as from each other.

To further engage with the complexities surrounding the construction of 'healthy' bodies and subjectivities, I now turn to an analysis of the ways the young men engaged in particular social practices to constitute their discursive subjectivities. By exploring the gendered bifurcation by which the young men and women come to form self-body relations by engaging a nexus of cultural discourses, this analysis will further disrupt essentialist and fixed notions of 'black' culture and subjectivities.

‘YOU GOTTA BE GOOD, OR YOU WON’T WIN IT’: YOUNG MEN’S CONSTRUCTIONS OF HEALTH AND BODIES THROUGH SPORT

... discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies.
(Foucault, 1979, p.138)

Sport, I argue, is a prime example of the production of disciplined bodies.
(Heikkala, 1993, p.398)

While the initial analysis in this chapter demonstrated that the young men and women consistently equated health with eating and exercise practices that could be read off the body, their responses later on in the first interviews and in the second interviews indicate that they actually had very different reasons for and ways of existing as healthy subjects. From this understanding of the data, I now provide evidence that ‘identifying as a man or a woman still strongly differentiates orientations to the body and the ways health discourses are taken up’ (Wright et al., 2006). Specifically, I argue that the young men employed particular ‘technologies of the self’ that are linked to the realization of a ‘healthy’ body that is equated with physical strength, which they consider to be vital in sport competition. This perspective becomes apparent in the following exchanges with John and Neal.

From John, a 15 year old African-American football and basketball player:

- Matt: Is being healthy something that um, you think about or is a part of your life? And if it is, in what ways is it?
- John: Yeah, I try to eat like, some fruit, sometimes, like 4 days out of the week. Try to pump some iron 5 times a week. [It's] Important to me to lift weights.
- Matt: How come?
- John: I'm tryin to go to the league.
- Matt: Try to go to which league?
- John: The NFL (National Football League).
- Matt: Uh huh...
- John: I'm gonna try to win the Heisman [an award given to the top college football player].
- Matt: Uh huh. So um, (pauses) why do you think being healthy is important for reaching those goals then, for you?

John: Cause you gotta be good, or you won't win it, and (pauses) stuff like that.

And from Neal, a 15 year old African-American basketball player:

Matt: OK, and would you want to be a '10'?

Neal: Yeah!

Matt: Tell me why...

Neal: Cuz in order for me to, like, do the best thing that I can do for basketball, I gotta, you know, that's, that's like the best way, you know, if I'm stronger and, you know, I eat right, then, I won't get injured that much and you know I do stretches and stuff, and uh, it's just something I would wanna look like.

Later in the interview Neal equates physical strength with health because it allows him to perform better on the court:

Matt: Uh huh, like in what way do you think you have to get stronger?

Neal: In like, being able to, you know, to, you know, have nobody stop me from doing what I gotta do like on the basketball court, like to do my move quick and sweet... smooove... and, you know, without anybody, you know, pushin' me off and I can't, you know, back em' down cuz they stronger... yeah.

Previously, I described how several of the young women took up differentiated subjectivities in relation to their desire for a physically strong body. At times, this strong body was variously linked with the abhorrence and avoidance of 'fat' as well as increased sport performance in the context of 'health'. Yet, while this position is similar to the young men's, I am building the case that the young women were reluctant and even resistant to doing the work that would help them attain this bodily ideal. In contrast, the young men above view eating and exercise as disciplinary practices that will help them to construct physically strong bodies that are able to perform in sport. For instance, based on my interactions with the young men in my study, I make the claim that because they are so deeply committed to success in sport, they would not think of ignoring their coaches' advice to 'eat healthy' as Sharon did. Nor is it likely that they would take up a

moderated approach to working out that was articulated by Irene (e.g. 'I got to work out, probably not that much' and 'it's cool, I ain't tripping'). This puts the young men in much closer alignment with notions of individual choice and self-improvement that have currency in the healthism and sport discourses.

As mentioned previously in the opening analysis, the young men in my study consistently linked health with adherence to specified eating and exercise practices – being healthy involves eating and drinking properly and adhering to a physically intensive exercise regimen. This formulaic approach to health is summed up by John as 'pump weights, eat right'. Here again, the young men describe how taking up these 'health' practices could be read off the body because these practices allowed one to 'stay in shape.' Being 'in shape' usually implied having a 'nice body' or the 'right look' – usually a muscular or athletic body that was devoid of excess fat and would help the person perform better in his particular sport. Even if someone was considered to be overweight, the young men felt that as long as the person could 'carry their weight', usually in the context of a sport contest, then this person was still healthy. While some of the Haitian young women were highly critical of and disgusted by 'fat', which was considered unattractive as well as unhealthy, the young men were not abhorred by the appearance of 'fat bodies'. While recent research (Drummond, 2001; Frost, 2003) suggests that young men are increasingly concerned with an 'obesity epidemic' (Gard & Wright, 2001, 2005) and are also beginning to appropriate health and beauty ideals associated with the achievement of a 'thin' body that has come to have currency within Western societies, I argue that the young men in my study were mostly concerned with avoiding excess body weight so that they could be elite athletes. Across all the interviews, the young men did not mention that 'fat' or 'overweight' people were 'nasty' in appearance or were health risks. For them, their moral devaluation of 'fat' and 'overweight' people was linked with the belief that these individuals could not play basketball or football at a high standard. This demonstrates how powerful moral valuations are made in relation to the notions of self-enhancement and individual choice that are associated with the discourses of health and sport made available to the young men. I contend that several of the

young men, particularly Bill, John, Adam, and Neal who want to use sport as a means of getting college/university athletic scholarships, do not only monitor and regulate their own bodies, but also come to surveil the bodies and eating and exercise practices of their peers. This often occurred with their teammates in the context of their sport competitions.

The young men's concern with the 'health' status of their teammates becomes more evident in the following excerpt from Neal. He comments that eating and exercising improperly is detrimental to a person's health because it negatively affects their sport performances. Because he considers success in sport to be a viable means to move on from his impoverished background (a background that is 'not so good' as he says), he has taken it upon himself to monitor and regulate the eating and exercise practices of his teammates. This technique of observing the 'health' patterns of those around him provides him with the means to justify his own particular 'healthy' relation to his self and body.

From Neal:

- Matt: Do you tell others how to be healthy? Do you pass on this information that you get to anybody?
- Neal: If I like, see somebody eatin' something wrong, like eating this or that, I be like 'you know that's bad for your health.' But they don't listen cuz, they think I'm playin', cuz' like I'm a jokester. I like to joke around, and I don't know, they probably don't think I'm serious.
- Matt: Like what do you tell them?
- Neal: Like, 'Man, that stuff going to give you heart [problems], I mean like, slow you down in the game,' and they be like 'shut up' or something like that, and I just like 'okay...', and they be slowin' down the game, and I'll be like 'I told you so...'

Neal's comments also suggest that a masculine hierarchy comes to be constructed in relation to a person's health, which can be read off their bodily movements (i.e. they are 'slow'). In this way, health is equated with an embodied capacity to play basketball. Those who are positioned as 'unhealthy' are seen as failing to make correct choices around the dominant health knowledges that have been made

available to them by their teammates such as Neal. Neal's comments resonate with Adam's suggestion in the opening analysis that 'unhealthy' people did not take up health advice given to them by their peers (i.e. 'everybody telling them to get up and do something, work out or something, [they] just like to sit there'). In this way, Neal and Adam make moral judgments about 'unhealthy' people who they feel are letting them down – their teammates who play 'slow' because they do not eat properly even when presented with health 'truths' are hindering Neal's and Adam's pursuit of an idealized 'black' masculine subjectivity that is linked with success in basketball.

The analysis above indicates that notions of individual choice and self-improvement that are associated with health dovetail with competitive sport discourses and speak powerfully to young men such as Neal, Adam, and John. Kirk (2004) argues that in a disciplinary society, the practices associated with sport, 'fitness', and the 'new dietary regimes' (p.129) work closely together in order to produce very similar kinds of idealized bodies.

From this viewpoint, I argue that the intersection of sport and health discourses which have currency in their neighborhoods provides these young men with a very prescriptive set of 'normalizing' practices associated with the body. As argued by Foucault (1979), disciplinary power serves to produce docile bodies that are increasingly productive, while at the same time constraining their capacity to be 'unruly' (Kirk, 2004, p.123). For instance, Neal's strong belief in the notion that a strong and 'healthy' body is an instrument through which to achieve basketball success is influenced by his coach who once commented that the hype surrounding Neal's playing ability had gone to his waistline. His coach made the following comments in the local newspaper: 'Once he got some publicity in summer, it seems like everyone wanted to take him out to eat... He kind of got caught up in that'. The way Neal's coach publicly admonishes him for overeating directly suggests that young male athletes such as Neal are subjected 'to authority and "external" control' in the form of 'the coach's gaze and commands' (Heikkala, 1993, p.401). The techniques of power associated with sport serve to

normalize the body under the gaze of the coach, which prevents the most competitive male athletes like Neal, John, and Adam from becoming ‘unruly’ or ‘body outlaws’ (Edut, 2003). Those young men who are unable to discipline and manage their bodies ‘properly’ are often subjected to further disciplinary techniques. Heikkala (1993), in her poststructural study of high-performance athletes, makes the point that ‘(s)tepping out of line is met with punishments, further discipline, additional exercises, or even with exclusion from the institution’s practices’ (p.400).

However, while the young men are subject to the technologies of power that render their bodies docile through sport training, the young men also *choose* to work on their selves and bodies by taking up these disciplinary practices. Heikkala (1993) argues that athletes internalize surveillance and disciplinary techniques that closely resemble those offered by the dominant moralistic and individualistic healthism discourse: ‘... athletes, as moral subjects, are able to monitor their own conduct, whether they behave in a morally responsible way’ (Heikkala, 1993, p.401). I argue that young men such as Adam, John, and Neal actively come to reflect upon and make choices in relation to these intersecting health and sport discourses. Drawing from Foucault’s (1997a) concept of ‘technologies of the self’, Heikkala (1993) argues that athletes such as Adam and Neal ‘are also subject to their own understanding and reflection relative to the ways they fulfill the plans [to achieve a sport ideal]’ (p.401). Moreover, ‘the will to do better must also carry a strong internalized feeling of a “need” or discipline and conformity to the practices necessary for achieving the desired goal’ (p.401). In another sense, then, Adam, John, and Neal actively participate in the construction of a ‘healthy’ subject-position that is linked to sport success. In order to achieve this ideal of health, they have adopted a range of disciplinary bodily practices. Ricky, who is another young African-American male basketball player in my study, wears rubber bands on his hands during school in order to strengthen his fingers and improve his grip on a basketball. Neal walks around Thompson High School wearing a weight vest so that he can improve his vertical leap for basketball games. While the coach exerts a form of disciplinary power upon their

bodies, these young men have also reflected upon their health status and made particular decisions about health practices in order to constitute their 'black' masculine subjectivities. The disciplinary practices that they eventually take up (i.e. wearing rubber bands and weigh vests) are considered to be necessary for them to develop strong and healthy bodies that are useful in sport.

Similar to the 15-18 year old young men found in Wright et al.'s (2006) study, none of the young men in my research study articulated reflective or critical positionings related to being 'healthy'. As argued by Wright et al., '(t)he "normality" of sport and physical activity as a "good" (p.24) was unproblematically taken up and (re)produced by the young men – they all assumed that being 'fat' and not exercising or eating properly was detrimental to their success in sport. What is crucial to this analysis is that the young men here are so subsumed by the narrow ideals of powerful health and sport discourses that they take up highly restrictive practices and have less freedom to construct alternative relations to the self and body. This is evident in the way they are unable to consider 'other body-self relationships that lie outside those of a taken for granted association between masculinity and competent physicality' (Wright et al., 2006, p.24). By increasingly regulating and working on their bodies, the young men are precluded from thinking about or moving the body in non-instrumental ways. This illustrates that while institutionalized sport is often positioned as providing liberating practices for the body, it actually serves here to 'enmesh bodies in matrices of power', whereby 'a form of corporeal regulation is retained' (Kirk, 2004, p.118).

The previous analysis suggests a disjuncture between how the young men and women come to construct and idealize themselves in relation to 'health'. While I argued that some of the young women used particular techniques such as 'abjection' in order to construct and maintain a body that would not be considered 'nasty' or unbecoming to look at, the young men here were primarily concerned with producing a strong body in order to be better sport competitors. Even though some of the young women such as Sharon and Irene articulated that they also

idealized a strong body, they were unwilling to perform the work that would be necessary to become the ideal. It comes as no surprise, then, that many of their track coaches made mention that they felt these young women were ‘lazy’, ‘unmotivated’, or didn’t work hard enough. Irene and Maureen eventually quit running at the high school, while Sharon stopped working out with a private coach – this coach told me that he felt Sharon did train hard enough to be a successful sprinter. It is becoming evident at this point that the young women often took up particular bodily practices in order to resist the calculative rationalities of the health and sport discourses (re)produced by their coaches. In comparison, the young men took up a range of dietary and exercise practices that were congruous with their coaches’ idealization of a physically strong body. This gendered bifurcation points to the differential set of discourses and positions of power that the young men and women negotiated in order to become ‘healthy’ subjects. Following this line of inquiry, I argue that the young women are able to find more spaces of freedom from which to take up alternative self-governing practices since they are less involved in organized sport. As such, I now explore how the young women talk differently about moving and maintaining the body and take up alternative self-body relations.

BODIES OF PLEASURE: YOUNG WOMEN AND THEIR EATING AND EXERCISE PRACTICES

A good club sandwich with a coke. That’s my pleasure. It’s true. With ice cream. That’s true. Actually I think I have a real difficulty in experiencing pleasure. I think that pleasure is a very difficult behaviour. (Foucault, 1996b, p.371)

In the previous section I made the case that the young men come to engage with physical activity as a form of exercise – ‘an instrumental means of achieving health’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.56) – and value instrumental ways of understanding and moving the body. This understanding of the body as an object to be mastered is (re)produced through the ‘masculine rationalities of health policy’ (p.54) and fails to engage with the possibilities of pleasurable embodiment. Within the context of the dominant health discourses, physical activity becomes a disciplinary practice

associated 'with the culturally valued practice of mastery (as control) over the hedonistic body' (Fullagar, 2002, p.80).

Following this perspective, I now perform a close reading of several of the young women's talk around eating and exercise practices in order to highlight the crucial role that the attainment of bodily pleasure plays in their self-formation. In so doing, I contend that these young women are able to take up relations to the self and modes of embodiment that diverge from the masculinist and instrumentalist norms of healthy living (Fullagar, 2003). In response to the opening quote from Foucault, I argue that several of the African-American or Haitian young women *do not* have difficulty in experiencing pleasure, and that it provides them with a sense of empowerment and enjoyment that shapes their investments in certain bodily practices. From this viewpoint, I argue that while Foucault's 'technologies of the self' is useful to understand the self-aware practices that the self performs on itself to become an 'ethical' subject of health, this concept is unable to 'distinguish between the varying priorities of different techniques of the self' (McNay, 1992, p.75) particularly as related to individuals' unconscious or unintentional desires surrounding pleasure. On one hand, I argue that the African-American and Haitian young women refuse a particular form of 'perfection' that is idealized by the white middle class culture of health in order to constitute their subjectivities. On the other hand, I provide another reading of the young women's interview texts to suggest that many of them unintentionally and/or even knowingly invested in certain eating and exercise practices to achieve bodily pleasure. While I concede that this bodily pleasure was sometimes socially constituted and indicative of their resistance towards white middle class health ideals, I also contend that there was a crucial physical component to this pleasure that provided the young women with a sense of satisfaction, sensuality, and happiness that is not linked with an 'ethical' or self-aware governing of the self.

While I opened this chapter with descriptions pointing to the young women's desire to maintain a healthy and fit body, often made in relation to the abjection of 'fat' bodies, their comments later in the first interview and within the second

interview indicated that many of them did not desire to invest themselves in the dominant dieting and exercise practices associated with ‘self-loathing’ and ‘self-control’ of the body. While they often mentioned that they knew the importance of eating and exercising ‘properly’, they were reluctant to adopt disciplinary health practices. Consider the following statement from Tara, a 15 year old African-American sprinter and basketball player:

Its weird, but we don’t really talk about it [health] at all, we’re just like, ‘lets go eat some pizza’, that’s about it, we’re not like, ‘oh we should go exercise because we ate all that,’ I try to cut down on it sometimes, but not really, we don’t talk about it at all (laughs)!

This quote indicates how some of the young women’s talk around exercise and eating practices is suggestive of a way of relating to the self that is not linked to the regulation and monitoring of the body, as was seen in the young men. In particular, it was the ways in which some of the young women talked about eating that indicates their desire to achieve bodily pleasure by consuming foods that health advocates would consider ‘unhealthy’. Maureen provided many statements indicative of this viewpoint. As articulated previously, Maureen feels that she has a physically strong body that she considers to be ‘healthy’. From this position she previously made many statements regarding the ‘abject’ bodies of other young women. In the subsequent exchanges she describes how she desires to eat ‘everything’ in order to feel ‘lazy’ and ‘full’. Prior to the following quote, Maureen was describing how her friend Candy was dieting because she wanted to lose weight. Maureen then comments that she does not feel compelled to adopt healthy eating practices:

Maureen: The only thing she [‘Candy’] talks about health is eating healthy and not eating a lot of junk food, like keeping off the ice cream, just stay off that, and drink water.

Matt: And what do you think about that?

Maureen: (laughs) Well, I don’t think there’s any problem... like I said, I eat everything.

Later from Maureen:

Matt: What do you eat?

Maureen: I eat everything, chicken, barbecue, ribs, junk food, and I have chicken strips, mashed potatoes, burgers are ok, and if I'm going to buy a burger, then I'll just go to Red Robin's [a hamburger restaurant]...

Further in the interview:

Matt: How do you feel when you eat, say, burgers, ribs and chicken, and things like that?

Maureen: How do I feel? After eating it, I feel lazy, I'll be so full.

Matt: Do you feel like you're still being healthy, or unhealthy?

Maureen: I don't feel bad (laughs) I really don't think about that, now that you brought that up, I really don't think about it.

Matt: But physically you feel lazy or mentally you feel lazy?

Maureen: I feel lazy, like my whole body feels lazy, when you feel lazy you just can't do anything else and you just sit and can't move.

Matt: Is that a good feeling?

Maureen: (laughs) Uh huh, it's bad but then again it's good... because people can sit somewhere and it feels good not to move, I don't know why, but that's just how it is with me.

When Maureen discussed eating, she dismissed the need to eat in accordance with the health knowledge given to her by her coaches. While she knows that she is supposed to eat healthy, she chooses to act differently because she eats what she likes, including barbeque ribs, chicken strips, and mashed potatoes. Maureen does not feel guilty or 'bad' about the way she eats – she knows that she is supposed to ('it's bad'), but eating tasty foods and not being able to move are very pleasurable embodied experiences for her. In the next excerpt Maureen discusses how her coaches wanted her to drink special shakes before track meets to perform better. It is particularly noteworthy that she takes up this information in very different ways from the young men who wanted to create and maintain their healthy' bodies for sport:

Matt: And what do you think about the information they [track coaches] give you? Tell me more about what they tell you, specifically.

Maureen: Like a kind of shake you can make, and if you add peanut butter to it, it will add protein, I don't like peanut butter, and every time there's a track meet, people drink it, and they feel active, and eat fruit, and before you run, don't drink milk, stretch, and peanuts are real good, but I hate peanuts... anything that's healthy, I don't eat, because its just nasty to me... and I just make my own shake.

Matt: And how do you feel about that?

Maureen: It's good, I can make a shake with banana and mango, but I add ice cream to it, but I don't care it's just junk food... and another thing, I don't drink dark pop.

Matt: Don't drink...

Maureen: Dark pop.

Matt: Like the Vanilla Coke you have on the table?

Maureen: Don't drink any dark pop... well I wanted Sprite but they didn't have any! (laughs)

Matt: So it seems like you go against the norm of what your coach says is healthy, and how do you feel about that?

Maureen: (laughs) That's just me.

Matt: You don't feel guilty at all?

Maureen: No, because I'm not doing anything wrong, unless you can tell, giving advice on what to eat, and I'll take it, but if I feel like it's not as bad, then I'll do it, I listen, and then just maybe I'll eat good, but for now, I'm just eating what I want.

Maureen's comments indicate that the running coaches provide her with a composite set of practices and knowledges associated with health. From their positions of power, the coaches come to (re)produce a range of 'truths' structured around a healthy/unhealthy binary, epitomized in the 'good' and 'bad' food distinction (Lupton, 1996) – fat is considered to be 'bad', while protein is considered to be 'good' for athletes. Furthermore, Lupton argues that this distinction between 'good' and 'bad' food involves a moral valuation that is made towards the person consuming these foods. Maureen seems to gain pleasure from operating in opposition to this 'health' knowledge that is (re)produced by her coaches. By eating 'bad' food she recognizes that she is taking up an oppositional health practice, whereby she comes to be positioned as both behaving 'bad' and taking up a 'bad' attitude. This resistance to her coaches gives her a sense of pleasure and satisfaction.

The young women such as Maureen and Sharon are able to take up differential relations to their selves and bodies because of the ‘gaps’ and ‘contradictions’ that they find in the health advice provided by the coaches. Both Maureen and Sharon are still able to run competitively at a high level even though they choose to take little notice of the ‘advice on what to eat’ given from their coaches. As Maureen says, ‘I’m not doing anything wrong’. Refusing and subverting the coaches’ advice is integral to the way Maureen constitutes her self (Maureen makes a very strong claim to *not* doing anything that is considered ‘healthy’). As she says, ‘That’s just me’. Irene, Maureen’s Haitian friend and running teammate, also describes the pleasures of eating in the following quote:

Matt: Ok, anything else with health, or fitness, do you see a distinction between what’s 'healthy,' and what’s being 'fit?'
 Irene: Yeah, don’t eat a lot of junk food! (laughs)
 Matt: Tell me more about that...
 Irene: (laughs) Especially if you don’t do exercise after you eat junk food, its not good for you, it fattens you up. I do that, but I exercise anyways. So... don’t eat too much, cause I do that. (laughs) I overfeed myself.
 Matt: You overfeed yourself?
 Irene: (laughing) Yeah, I don’t know why I do that but I like to do it.
 Matt: Uh huh.
 Irene: And I get tired, and get so lazy you can’t even get up, you can’t do nothin’, that’s just how I am... and I just start laughin’ for no reason because I’m full. I don’t know why I do that but I just do.

Irene’s comment that ‘I exercise anyways’ suggests that she thinks that individuals can correct caloric imbalances in their bodies (caused by ‘overfeeding’) through exercise. This view is indicative of the ‘energy in’ and ‘energy out’ perspective that has great currency in the Western health culture, whereby the body is reduced to a vessel which needs to maintain ‘the correct ratio of energy input versus energy output’ (O’Flynn, 2004, p.67). However, Irene’s comments (e.g. ‘I just start laughin’ for no reason’ and ‘I don’t know why I do that but I just do’) strongly suggest that her enjoyment of eating is not simply because she knows that she cancels out the calories through exercise, but that eating, indeed ‘overfeeding’, brings her a lot of bodily pleasure. Similarly,

Maureen made comments such as ‘it feels good not to move, I don’t know why, but that’s just how it is’, indicating that there was an embodied pleasure associated with eating that was unexplainable, and not simply linked with the ‘energy in’ and ‘energy out’ formulation.

To further explore the pleasurable ‘health’ practices taken up by the young African-American and Haitian women in my study, and to explore the divergent ways they come to conceptualize and maintain their health status in relation to other predominantly white cohorts, I turn to an exchange with Tara, a 16 year old African-American female in my study. I subsequently contrast Tara’s comments with those made by Karen, a white Australian female high school student who was part of O’Flynn’s (2004) health and physical activity study. In the following exchange, Tara describes how becoming a very healthy person required more self-control and work on the body than she was willing to do. This position was consistent with that of several other young women in my study:

- Matt: So would you want to be a ‘10’ (an ideal of health)? A number ‘10’ I guess? As you described it?
- Tara: I don’t know, because I’m the type of person who would want to eat whatever I wanted to at the time, so I probably wouldn’t want to be a 10, I would probably want to work my way up to a 10, I would want to work my way up to a 10, but I wouldn’t want to watch what I eat, have boundaries and stuff like that... but to be in that kind of shape, that’s good, but I wouldn’t want to in that kind of shape, that soon, like right now, because I would want to eat junk food
- Matt: Because you would want to eat junk food?
- Tara: Yeah, yeah, because I would want to eat sugar! (laughs) I mean I would want to eat whatever I felt like; I wouldn’t want to monitor what I eat, pretty much.

During the interview Tara wore an orange ‘Cookie Monster’ t-shirt and commented that she liked to eat cookies. After this interview I wrote in my field notes that Tara went across the street to the market to get some Oreo cookies to eat with her friends. Now I will contrast how Tara enjoys eating ‘junk food’, ‘sugar’, and cookies with an excerpt from Karen to illustrate their different eating

practices and orientations to food and eating. In the next passage Karen makes clear her distaste for greasy and oily foods because they make her feel ‘fat’ and talks about how she *chooses* to eat ‘better’ foods that make her feel ‘fresh’ and ‘revived’:

... after you eat a bucket of hot chips, you feel really fat and you feel greasy and oily, like you can taste the aftertaste in your mouth. Whereas you eat a sandwich and you don’t have all these feelings. You feel fresh and revived type thing. So I guess I’ve learnt you know, this is what I get if I eat this, and this is what I get if I eat this. So I’ll choose the better one. (O’Flynn, 2004, p.78)

O’Flynn (2004) further comments that Karen was pre-occupied with learning about healthy practices in order to make the ‘correct’ health choices. She also extensively controlled her body by monitoring her (and others’) eating and exercise practices. Taken together, these two quotes illustrate how the ‘health’ practices that some young white women chose to take up in order to achieve a ‘healthy’ self and body diverge from those choices made by the young ‘black’ and Haitian women such as Irene, Maureen and Tara. O’Flynn (2004) argues that Karen formed a particular relationship with her body that is congruent with the dominant Western middle class healthism discourse – this involved extensively monitoring and regulating her (and others’) exercise and eating practices in order to become the healthy and fit female subject idealized in Western societies. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Irene, Maureen, and Tara were similarly able to (re)produce distinctions between ‘good’ foods and ‘bad’ foods, and make moral valuations based on their observations of ‘fat’ people whom they considered to be unhealthy. However, these ‘black’ young women also engaged in practices that included eating (indeed *overeating* and *overfeeding* themselves) greasy and sugary foods and avoiding overly-strenuous work outs. Furthermore, becoming ‘thin’ was not desirable for these young women. Their positions on healthy eating and exercise and the practices that they subsequently took up to constitute their subjectivities seemed to diverge considerably from those articulated by Karen and

young women like her. While working towards the ‘healthy’ ideal provides Karen with a sense of normalcy, certainty, and self-control, the young women in my study were more interested in practices that produced a strong body achieved preferably through their pleasurable pursuits. They chose not to ‘monitor’, ‘watch’, or ‘have boundaries’ around their eating and exercise practices. Their healthy status was instead maintained through their enjoyment of eating and feeling lazy and full. Furthermore, they don’t feel guilty about how they eat, and they don’t feel bad about themselves.

The question remains however: By eating what they want, and exercising when they want, do these young women govern their bodies in ways that make a ‘political statement’ and disrupt the power relations of a dominant Western healthism discourse? It has been argued by several researchers (Bartky, 1988; Bordo, 1989, 1992; Fullagar, 2003) that the achievement of feminine beauty and health ideals of the body involves the internalization of the patriarchal gaze. As a result, O’Flynn (2004) notes that self-surveillance and the taking up of health practices become ‘forms of submission to patriarchal expectations and codes’ (p.61). Also, because these are African-American and Haitian young women, they exist as the ‘physical embodiment of features rejected by Western beauty criteria’ and their ‘fleshy’ bodies ‘specifically reinforces the patriarchy’s insistence upon female slenderness and delicacy’ (Shaw, 2005, p.146). Following this pattern of reasoning, I argue that by failing to take up disciplinary practices offered to them by dominant health discourses, these young women are able to refuse the dominant Western masculine gaze and ‘subvert the normalizing codes of femininity’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.56). However, is it possible that this refusal of normalized femininity provides a point of resistance from which these young women come to exist as ‘ethical’ subjects of their own behavior?

While Foucault’s (1997a) ‘technologies of the self’ was a useful analytics to understand why young women such as Irene, Maureen, and Tara might choose to invest in particular health practices over others, I see limitations with the deployment of this theoretical concept because it does not address the unintended

way that these young women invested in particular health practices and subjectivities, and the possible cultural rewards or bodily satisfaction attained by these investments. I would argue that these young women often unconsciously or uncritically take up particular self-body relations in order to achieve a subject-position linked with their desire for happiness and pleasure. It is reasonable to assume that the pleasures derived from the young women's eating and exercise practices are, at least in part, discursively shaped. For instance, there is a sense of pleasure and freedom that is afforded to them because *they know* that eating 'bad' foods and not 'working out' challenges the authority of their coaches. Yet, I do not want to reduce the young women's experiences and selves by only understanding pleasure as a deliberated upon product of 'moral training' and as an 'ethical' desire of the self. On many occasions the young women's eating practices undoubtedly provide them with physical sensations of sensuality, happiness, and satisfaction *that are not easily understood or articulated* (as Irene comments, 'I don't know but I do'). The pleasurable experiences associated with eating and exercise is fundamental to the ways these young women constitute their nuanced 'racial' and 'ethnic' 'healthy' subjectivities.

CARE OF THE SELF: THE 'FAT BLACK FEMALE BODY' AS A SITE OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE

I grew up among black working- and middle class, churchgoing folks who loved to eat... It was also our resistance. Eating with zest and abandon was like turning centuries of oppression upside down. (Logwood, 2003, p.97)

Even the naturally thin among us will scorn that flat, dimensionless body type that the fashion magazines wave in our faces. After all, it reminds us of a mold that 99.9 percent of us will never fit, even with the 'right' body. Save for a Tyra [Banks] or a Naomi [Campbell], most black women intrinsically know we'll always be 'too much' of this or 'not enough' of that to fit the American beauty standard. (Logwood, 2003, p. 101)

In the previous section I described how several of the young women take up pleasurable health practices of eating and exercise in order to exist as ‘black’ and ‘ethnic’ ‘healthy’ subjects. While their comments and subject-positions gesture towards an ‘ethics of self’ that refuses ‘the dominant logic of health’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.57), I also argue that their unconscious and/or unintentional desire for pleasure cannot be captured within an ethical analysis. As such, I contend that multiple readings are necessary to understand the ways the young women come to understand and relate to their selves and bodies in ways that exceed ‘a calculative logic’ (p.57).

In this section I return to Foucault’s later work around an ‘ethics of self’ (1986, 1997a, 1997b) to present evidence that Sasha, a ‘mixed black’ female dancer, was most able to ‘value a relation to the body based on a ethics of attentiveness, of affectivity or care’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.57). Sasha was aged 16 when she joined my study and lived with her mother, younger sister Monet (who was also in my study), and younger brother across the street from my house. Our neighborhood would be considered one of the more gentrified areas of Southwest Springfield. In comparison, I would categorize young women such as Irene and Maureen as living in more impoverished neighborhoods. Sasha’s mother worked full time at a package shipping firm and could afford to provide her with dance lessons throughout her youth. Sasha eventually came to take part in the African, hip hop, and ballet classes at Thompson High School. After school she participated in the more exclusive ‘Thompson Dance Club’ performing group. Particularly in the more advanced or elite dance programs, Sasha was in close proximity to many white middle and upper class young women who specifically come to the high school to participate in the dance classes and performance groups. Sasha, who describes herself as being ‘mixed black’, often made mention that she was physically much larger than the overwhelming majority of these ‘white girls’. Many of her comments illustrate that she, as well as many of her physically larger ‘black’ female peers, were ostracized by their white female counterparts for being ‘bigger’. According to Sasha, both the dance instructors and the white young women in her classes and performance groups considered the ‘black’ women to be

too heavy and thus unable to perform the more demanding ballet and modern dance routines.

In this section I demonstrate how Sasha was often confronted with powerful health and beauty imperatives to maintain a slim body size by both her dance teachers and white female peers. However, I argue that she was able to refuse the normalized Western assumptions around the healthy and beautiful ‘thin’ body by creating alternative ways of governing her self. Often, she took up self-forming health practices that contrasted with those employed by the young white females in her high school dance spaces. This often took place through her observations of their bodies and health practices. In this way, Sasha returns the ‘gaze’ back towards the white young females who embody the dominant health rationales and have constituted her as the ‘fat’ black female ‘Other’.

This analysis of how Sasha governs her self by producing ‘a different relation to the body’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.57) is made through recourse to Foucault’s concept of ‘the care of the self’ (1986, 1997a, 1997b). As outlined in Chapter Two, in his later works Foucault describes the ancient Greeks’ ethical or moral techniques of the self that provide the individual with a sense of freedom, beauty, and self-mastery. By equating ethics with the self-aware practices of freedom, Foucault seeks to ‘loosen the grip of our self-understanding’ in order to ‘make possible a different relationship to our thought, ourselves and others, as well as to our pleasures’ (Rabinow, 1996, p. xxciii). Following this line of reasoning, I argue that Sasha provides a compelling example of how one develops a particular ethical relationship to one’s self (*rappor a soi*) that involves self-awareness and ascribing to particular techniques of the self.

In her initial health interview, Sasha talked about the need for a balanced approach to health that involved eating and exercising in the proper amounts. In so doing, she (re)produced the widely held belief that individuals should correct energy imbalances by moderating their eating and exercise practices (Gard & Wright, 2005). However, she later made statements in a ‘mapping’ interview around

dance spaces that contradicted this position and indicates a more politicized relationship to health that is formed by taking up non-normative self-body relations. In her comments about the dance spaces, she is highly critical of the white young women whom she implicates as (re)producing a ‘cult of slenderness’ (Tinning, 1985), which works to position her as the ‘fat black female’ (Shaw, 2005) and (re)produces anxieties around the maintenance of the body. While young women such as Irene, Maureen, Sharon, and Tara often took up alternative ways of governing their selves that involved achieving bodily pleasure through eating what they liked and exercising only when they felt like it, often they were unaware as to why they were resistant to certain practices over others. It is clear that Sasha is taking up a much more self-aware ‘political project’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.57) that involves contrasting her ‘everyday practices and identities’ (p.57) with those taken up by the white young women around her. I argue that it is Sasha’s close proximity to the ‘thin’ white females in her dance spaces that affords her with her particular ‘ethical’ stance. While Sasha uncritically and simplistically (re)produced *what she felt she should say* about health when prompted in the health interview, she deploys a much more critical and sophisticated understanding of health when describing her participation in the dance classes and programs³²:

- Matt: Tell me about what you were saying about girls talking about you or the competition. Is that ever apparent in any of your dance spaces?
- Sasha: Well mainly in my African classes at Thompson was the predominantly white students because a lot of the times they had this stereotypical dancer in their mind and my physical appearance doesn’t fit into their little mould. So like you know, I wasn’t as skinny as the other girls, I wasn’t as short as the other girls, you know. So of course they were like ‘okay, why are *you* in this class?’ Just little things I had to struggle with, even with some of the teachers, you know, telling me that I needed to lose a little weight for this or I need to work on, just

³² This excerpt will also be used in Chapter Six to provide a more spatially-centered analysis of ‘hybrid’ identities. This will involve a more explicit analysis of the ways in which Sasha engages with health and body discourses that she links with ‘whiteness’ in the context of her dance classes and programs.

work on my body in general. I mean it wasn't a big deal with me because I already had the self-confidence and it didn't affect me. But I've seen it affect other girls that weighed more than some of the other girls or didn't have as good feet or couldn't jump as high. So I was just glad not to have to deal with that. Every time that I don't have to deal with something like that is good. But at Thompson in the afternoon classes some of the girls had real bad problems with their weight and a few of the girls were actually either anorexic or bulimic and just basically did anything to try to keep that stereotypical body type.

Matt: What would you say that stereotypical body type was?

Sasha: Well like really slim girls, perfect height, not too short, not too tall, about five seven, five eight, you know, and they probably weighed like one hundred and fifteen pounds and had like no meat on their bones, just skinny for no reason.

The previous exchange crystallizes how Sasha takes up a particular relationship to the self and body that involves refuting white middle class ideals of health and the feminine body. When she comments that she is unconcerned about being skinny, I suggest that she is making a politicized claim around a particular 'black' or African-American subjectivity. While Sasha comes from a 'mixed black' background that includes a Caucasian grandparent, it is clear that she is positioned by her peers as being 'black' because of her larger body size and dark skin color. In response to this positioning, Sasha comes to construct a subject-position that is linked with a 'black' cultural tradition that is more accepting of larger bodies. This subject-position exists in comparison to the white young women who she claims are pre-occupied with losing weight and working out. By positioning these young women and their bodies as disordered (e.g. they 'starve' themselves, have 'eating disorders', 'do weird things', and overwork themselves), 'abjection' becomes a useful technique of the self through which Sasha constructs her 'ethical' subject-position. By abjecting the 'thin' bodies of the white young women in her dance classes and re-inscribing them as unethical and immoral, she is able to differentiate her own set of self-governing practices. She refuses her instructors' advice to lose 'a little weight' and to work on her body, thereby enacting a form of resistance. As argued by St. Pierre (2004), it is these types of self-aware practices that constitute the subject of 'the care of the self'.

Foucault argues that renouncing the self is a crucial component of ‘the care of the self’ because it allows us to ‘problematize who we are’ (St. Pierre, 2004, p.346) and move beyond our narrow ways of self-governance. In this case, Sasha is able to renounce her deficit positioning as a ‘fat’ and ‘black’ young woman by problematizing the practices of her white female counterparts, and comes to take up ‘a different, mindful relation to self’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.58). I argue that Sasha takes up an ‘ethics of care’ that resists the self-forming practices associated with the body that are linked with a dominant ‘dutiful and calculative notion of health’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.58) which has currency with her white female counterparts in the dance spaces. By affirming a physically larger and ‘black’ feminine body that is not simply an object to be ‘pushed harder, scrutinized more closely and worked on’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.58), she comes to feel empowered as a young ‘black’ woman even as she is ‘othered’ in her primarily white middle class dance spaces.

DISCUSSION

It is argued that neo-liberal Western societies impart specific ways of governing the self and body through the uptake of ‘healthy’ practices which are often linked with white middle class notions of individual empowerment and social integration. This ‘ethics of responsibility’ (Fullagar, 2003, p.50) is fundamental to the dominant health discourses which have currency in the West, and powerfully speaks to the young people in my study. The (re)production of neo-liberal practices in the context of health was evident in the beginning of the first interviews, where the young people in my study consistently articulated the importance of adhering to prevailing health practices and imperatives. The young people in my study described how their peers took up the wrong attitudes, behaviors, and practices in relation to health. The young people in the study emphasized that ‘unhealthiness’ could be read off the ‘fat’ body. ‘Unhealthiness’ was directly linked with the image of the ‘couch potato’ – sedentary, oversized, and eating copious amounts of ‘junk food’ and ‘chips’. Those who embodied the ‘couch potato’ were positioned as having ‘serious moral failings’ (Jutel, 2005, p.119).

However, the young people later provided more in-depth comments associated with health practices and the body later in the first interview, as well as in their second interviews. As Wright et al. (2006) argue, this strongly suggests that ‘young people “know” the relationships between diet, exercise, and health as they are promoted in public health discourse, but that knowledge is taken up very differently by young men and women and also differently within groups of young women and men’ (p.27). Similarly, while the young people in my study easily and uncritically (re)produced what they ‘knew’ about health practice, they actually constituted their healthy subjectivities in very complex and contradictory ways. The ways they constructed and maintained their healthy status was often indicative of their cultural, ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, classed, and gendered backgrounds.

Throughout this chapter I argue that the self is constructed and embodied through the operation of prevalent power/knowledge relations. At the same time, individuals participate in the processes of self-formation by tactically negotiating available discourses in new and unexpected ways (Raby, 2005). From this perspective I deployed and problematized Foucault’s (1997a) concept of ‘technologies of the self’ because this concept provided a specific way of examining the ways social imperatives work through dominant health discourses and effect young people in powerful ways. Through my particular reading of this concept, I critically examined the ways normative practices and ideals of the body (re)produced by health discourses are negotiated, contested, and (re)produced by young people.

Following Wright et al. (2006), I argue that the young men and women shape their subjectivities and manage their bodies in relation to dominant ideals of health and beauty in divergent ways. My contention is that the young men took up disciplinary health practices associated with maintaining their bodies in ways that are congruent with neo-liberal sport and health discourses. The young men were easily and uncritically able to explain the reciprocal relationship between a healthy subjectivity and better sport performances and how this impacted upon their health practices. They viewed their bodies as instruments that needed to be

self-disciplined and self-monitored in order to achieve sport success. I suggest that the narrow focus of the dominant health discourses found in their sport programs provided them with a limited repertoire from which to engage with their bodies.

However, while the young men seemed to have considerable investments in the dominant health discourses – they felt that being overweight was a condition that would prevent athletic success and should therefore be prevented or remedied – it was some of the young women who made visceral comments suggesting an ‘unconscious aversion’ (Young, 1990) towards those whose bodies were considered ‘fat’. Following Young (1990) and Kristeva (1982), I argue that Sara, Irene, and Maureen constructed a relationship to the healthy body that was based around the ‘abjection’ of other ‘black’ female bodies. Sara, the academic-achieving French-Canadian/Hispanic female who embodied the ‘thin’ white body ideal, took up a particular neo-liberal subject-position around abjection whereby she considered ‘fatness’ to be ‘unethical, self-indulgent and immoral’ (O’Flynn, 2004, p.64) and should therefore to be ‘controlled or fixed through an individual’s vigilant investment into “health” practices’ (p.64). When these derogatory comments are made by the Haitian women, I argue that they are disassociating themselves from African-American culture, which they often consider to be ‘crazy’, ‘ghetto’, and undesirable. This illustrates the ways that the Haitian young women come to understand their diasporic ‘black’ subjectivities as distinct from African-American or ‘black’. This calls into question unifying conceptions of ‘blackness’ and femininity which are often deployed in social research.

While these young women expressed their distaste for ‘fat’ bodies, many of them also articulated that they wanted to take up healthy practices in order to develop a body that weighed more and was stronger. This position seemed consistent across the female range of the cohort. Drawing from the comments of Sharon and Irene, I argue that their desire to construct a stronger and heavier body that they considered to be ‘healthy’ was used to construct their subject-positions as distinctive from the ideal ‘thin’ bodies of white females. It was notable that Irene

considered a stronger body to free of ‘baby fat’ and comprising of ‘cut’ and ‘six pack’ chiseled muscles which wouldn’t be visible with a heavier body, which again points to the abjection expressed by the Haitian women towards ‘black fat’. Sharon, on the other hand, equated physical strength with a heavier body obtained through eating more. This once more illustrates the distinctive ways in which the young Haitian and African-American women conceptualize the ‘healthy’ body and take up their nuanced ‘black’ subjectivities.

However, while the young ‘black’ and Haitian women were very forthright about their disdain for ‘fat’ bodies and also their desire to construct and maintain stronger ‘healthy’ bodies that were not ‘thin’ and therefore ‘not white’, they rarely invested themselves in practices that would achieve these types of ‘healthy’ subject-positions. I provide evidence that Irene, Maureen, and Tara demonstrated resistance towards taking up a white middle class ‘healthy’ lifestyle. In contrast to young white females in other research cohorts (O’Flynn, 2004), their comments indicate that, from their perspective, self-monitoring their bodies and adhering to disciplinary exercise and fitness practices required too much self-control and hard work. In particular, their experiences of pleasure were important in the ways these young women engaged with their bodies in relation to eating and exercise practices. While some of these pleasures were discursively shaped by the knowledge that they were contradicting the wishes of their sport coaches, these young women also took up particular eating and exercise practices in order to maximize bodily pleasure. In both ways, through their engagements with pleasure, they became particular kinds of ‘healthy’ subjects. While I argue that the ‘technologies of the self’ are useful in understanding the deliberated upon self-work that Maureen performs in order to exist as a diasporic ‘healthy’ subject, I also provide another reading of pleasure outside the framework of ‘moral training’ and as ‘ethical’ practice to become subjects. I argue that the attainment of pleasure for pleasure’s sake, with no ‘purpose’ or ‘function’ (Grosz, 1995, p.183), is equally important to the processes of self-formation.

While the notion of ‘technologies of the self’ was only partially useful in understanding the practices by which African-American and diasporic young women came to exist as subjects of pleasure, I argue that Sasha took up techniques of the self that approaches the ethical relationship characterized by Foucault (1986, 1997a, 1997b) as the ‘care of the self’. Sasha’s talk demonstrates that she governs her self and body by ‘abjecting’ the disordered ‘thin’ bodies of the white young women in her elite dance classes. In so doing, she takes up an ethics of the self that refuses her deficit positioning as the unhealthy, undesirable and incapable ‘fat’ black female ‘Other’. By repudiating her position as the ‘Other’ and taking up a self-aware and politicized ‘black’ feminine subjectivity, she is able to gain a sense of freedom and empowerment within the narrow discursive rationalities that exist in her exclusive dance spaces.

Taken together, these analyses of the young women illustrate that they were not simply ignorant, indifferent, or incapable of engaging with dominant health knowledge and practices, but rather that they desired to take up eating and exercise practices that afforded them a greater sense of satisfaction than the disciplinary practices offered to them via dominant health ‘truths’. It therefore behooves researchers and community policy makers to reconsider and reflect upon the ways they conceptualize health practices because they provide only a narrow understanding of health and of people’s investments in their bodies that does not fit with the desires and practices of many young people.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis that is emerging indicates that the young women recognize that they have been constructed as the ‘Other’ in relation to a matrix of cultural discourses. Young women such as Maureen and Sasha are particularly adept at re-negotiating their ‘othered’ positionings in order to exist in more favorable ways. However, the ways the young men construct their healthy subjectivities in this chapter in relation to very powerful neo-liberal and healthism discourses which intersect with broader notions of masculinity, ‘race’, and class, is worrying. The young men have been so circumscribed by a nexus of health and sport discourses that

they seem to only know themselves as athletes – it is worth speculating about what will happen when their sense of self is disrupted by injury, lack of opportunity, or other factors. While it would require a longitudinal study to answer this question, I am building the case that dominant health and sport discourses work to position the young men in ways that do nothing to prepare them for life events that bring about departures from seemingly ‘natural’ practices and ways of being.

From a poststructural position, individuals have multiple subjectivities and therefore one ‘subjectivity cannot be synonymous with the totality of the individual’ (Harwood, 2000, p.189). This suggests that a ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’ subjectivity is only one of many forms of subjectivity negotiated by the young people in my study. Thus, from this position, in the next two chapters I engage with the differential ways the young people engage with complex and contradictory subjectivities made available to them in physical activity and sport contexts. In particular, this analysis requires that I prompt new questions around the spatial processes that are integrally linked with the cultures of basketball and dance. Moving forward with the Foucauldian concepts of discourse and subjectivity, I turn to a body of poststructural-informed cultural geography literature which examines how ‘social spaces’ (re)produce gendered, racialized, and class discourses that are constitutive of the young people’s subjectivities.

CHAPTER FIVE: 'BASKETBALL IS LIKE BREATHING': URBAN SPACES, 'BLACK' MASCULINITY, AND 'JUST DO IT'

INTRODUCTION

Basketball, the premiere sport in Black urban ghettos, has become a multi-million dollar sports industry... Inner-city youths who can barely read aspire to be like their superstar heroes; they spend hours on concrete courts practicing steps and moves they hope will get them to the heavenly kingdom of professional basketball. (White & Cones III, 1999, p.67)

We want better for ourselves and, like, by using basketball as a tool... as a tool you try to get out of here, you know like try to get to college, you know try to make something of our lives. (Neal, age 17)

The culture of basketball has become a major influence in the lives of urban impoverished African-American males in the United States. During the time I lived in southwest Springfield, I observed that basketball was a very popular and high-profile sport in this area. There are well-supported basketball camps, open gym programs, numerous community tournaments, and high school and club teams. I have seen young children sitting on front porches tossing tiny balls into the encircled arms of mothers on summer days. Even a homeless man walks down the main thoroughfare bouncing a basketball. Turn down many streets and young people can often be seen throwing balls up towards portable or makeshift basketball hoops (Figure 5.1). Park courts refurbished by old worn Nike shoes are filled to the brim, especially during the summer on weekend afternoons when these spaces play host to numerous pickup games and community tournaments (Figure 5.2). Basketball is played everywhere and, as is the case elsewhere in the United States, is seen by many African-American young men in southwest

Springfield as a means to a better life. However, it has been extensively documented that the ‘heavenly kingdom of professional basketball’ is very often a mirage³³. While several scholars have described the social conditions that work to imbue these young men with ‘hoop dreams’³⁴ (Edwards, 1983; hooks, 2004; Kelley, 1997a, 1997b; White & Cones III, 1999) few of them have engaged with the everyday experiences of the multitude of young African-American males who have bought into the neo-liberal ideal of a ‘hoop dream’. To date, the most telling works around the lives of these young African-American men have been found in mainstream media movies, magazines, and books (Frey, 2004; Hock, 2005; James, 1994; Marx & James, 1992; Telander, 1995). Yet, the recent fascination with the ‘black’ masculine culture of American inner-city basketball has been criticized for (re)producing reductionist and misrepresentative ‘coming of age’ narratives (Cole & King, 1998). Furthermore, both the scholarly literature and the popular works do not explore the discursive sets of resources operating in specific spatial contexts that work to constitute the young men’s meanings of basketball. This line of inquiry is necessary given that it is through their engagements with the discursive resources associated with the culture of basketball that young ‘black’ men come to construct their nuanced and pluralized masculine subjectivities.

Sociologist Robin Kelley (1997b) has argued that racialized urban basketball spaces have been portrayed within neo-liberal Western societies in ways that invoke notions of ‘play and pleasure amid violence and deterioration’ (Kelley,

³³ White and Cones III (1999) describe the paucity of opportunities that are available to young men seeking basketball scholarships and professional careers in the following extended quote: ‘Statistics show that odds against a high school basketball player making it into the pros are astronomical. Fewer than 1 percent of the slightly more than half-million teenagers who play high school basketball will win scholarships at four-year colleges, and many of those who do win basketball scholarships never graduate. Approximately 200 players are drafted annually into the National Basketball Association, and of those 200, about 50 make the teams. The average NBA career lasts about four years, so the top fifty of the millions of youngsters who start playing in grade school will be basketball has-beens by age twenty-six or twenty-seven’ (p. 87).

³⁴ A ‘hoop dream’ refers to the hope of inner-city African-American young men to garner college or university scholarships and/or to land lucrative professional contract through basketball success. This phrase was made popular by the movie ‘Hoop Dreams’ (James, 1994) which followed two talented African-American male basketball players living in inner-city Chicago and their pursuit of fame and fortune.

1997b, p.196). This popular representation of urban basketball spaces supports the widely-held belief that individuals living in poor inner-city areas can avoid crime, be safe, enjoy themselves, learn valuable life lessons, and be better citizens by playing basketball. However, under the guise of self-improvement and ‘community harmony’ (Jamieson, 1998, p.346), it is argued that sport spaces provide the conditions for sexist, racist, and homophobic practices that serve to (re)produce social inequalities (Birrell, 1989; Jamieson, 1998, 2003). As such, in this chapter I explore the possibilities that spaces such as basketball gyms and park courts are not inherently egalitarian and neutral, but (re)produce social practices and hierarchies that overwhelmingly privilege hegemonic masculinities.

SPATIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF MASCULINE SUBJECTIVITIES AND HIERARCHIES

From a poststructural perspective ‘masculinity’ is not a fixed or objective category but is instead a fluid subjectivity that is taken up by the young men in my study in multiple ways. Masculine subjectivities are shaped by ‘the range of possibilities, interests, and the experiences of everyday life’ (Laberge & Mathieu, 1999, p.249) that are specific to one’s specific classed, gendered, and ‘racial’ positioning. What is critically important to this understanding of the ‘constructedness’ and ‘situatedness’ of masculinity(ies) is that there is a proliferation of masculine subjectivities that are conferred or adopted with differential amounts of power. As sport sociologist Michael Messner (1990a) argues:

at any given moment there are various masculinities – some hegemonic, some marginalized, some subordinated... Hegemonic masculinity – that form of masculinity which is ascendant – is defined in relation to the subordination of women *and* in relation to other (subordinated, marginalized) masculinities. (p.205, author’s emphasis)

This concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ was originally developed by Connell (1987, 1995) and usefully demonstrates the ways in which a ‘gender order’ is constituted by and of specific power relations operating in particular social contexts. According to Connell, within institutional and social contexts some men

take up culturally idealized masculine subjectivities involving physical strength, competition, and aggression, as well as the domination of other men and women. This exercising of physical power over others works to construct and (re)produce social differences and hierarchies.

Furthermore, Connell (1995) argues that the culture of sport is supported by the (re)production of social hierarchies organized around hegemonic masculinities. Thus, at the expense of marginalized and subjugated males and females, sport often comes to be constituted as ‘a “natural” arena for men’ and a ‘major part in *male* life’ (Wellard, 2002, p.238, author’s emphasis). Because ‘racial’ and class discourses are also deeply implicated in the formation and (re)production of masculinities, any investigation into the masculine culture of sport must also take into consideration these discursive impacts and the crucial role they play in sustaining social differences and hierarchies. Leisure studies researchers Ian Wellard (2002) and Kath Woodward (2004), for instance, have examined the ways that one’s social location and habitus work to engender particular forms of hegemonic masculinities. They argue that sport is a primary area where men can convert physical capital and acquire cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), depending on their class backgrounds and choice of sport. Woodward (2004) argues that boxing is an important arena for lower and working-class males to convert their physical capital and to take up hegemonic ways of being male. Economic and cultural capital is bestowed upon those males who are most capable of physically pummeling the bodies of others, which affords them with greater positions of power. Yet, because sport has historically and socially been constructed in ways that privilege *white* male authority and identities, a more sophisticated account of masculinity engaging with the intersections of ‘race’, gender, and class is required (Carrington, 1998). In the context of sport, ‘black’ masculinity has historically been a subordinated form of masculinity. This suggests that the masculine culture of sport is supported by white middle class heterosexual male domination of women *and* ‘black’ males. Yet, because ‘black’ males have often used sport as a means of resisting white (masculine) racism by taking up a dominant form of masculinity that involves physical aggression and violence (Messner, 1992), how

might these ‘black’ masculinities maintain their hegemonic status by subjugating less physically-dominant ‘black’ men and women? This suggests an analytical model that takes into account the discursive constitution of ‘black’ masculinity along the lines of binary categorizations such as ‘black’/white and male/female, whilst also paying attention to intra-’racial’ social practices. From this position, an ‘intersectional’ analytical approach (Brah, 1996) is useful to illustrate how various masculinities come to be constructed along the axes of ‘race’ and class, as well as gender, and simultaneously serve to (re)produce social hierarchies structured along ‘racial’, gendered, and classed differences.

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF DIVIDING PRACTICES AND SOCIAL HIERARCHIES IN SPACES

To understand the social processes by which masculinities are discursively constituted in space, I turn to Lefevre’s (1991) conceptualization of ‘social space’. As outlined in Chapter Two, the notion of ‘social space’ can be used to demonstrate how hegemonic masculinities come to be constituted by and are constitutive of social practices and power relations that operate in basketball spaces. In order to specifically determine how basketball spaces (re)produce hegemonic masculinities that are constructed in relation to ‘racial’, classed, and gendered discourses, I turn to Foucault’s (1983) concept of ‘dividing practices’:

I have studied the objectivizing of the subject in what I shall call ‘dividing practices.’ The subject is either divided inside himself (sic) or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. (p.208)

From this perspective, sets of ‘truth’ discourses work through social practices to categorize and isolate particular subjects from others. The concept of dividing practices is useful to explore how discursive power relations and social differences are constituted by and constitutive of particular masculine subjectivities. What is particularly important is that dominant forms of masculinity come to exist through the (re)production of dividing practices that serve to objectify other males and females. This concept lends itself to the understanding of basketball spaces as sites where dividing practices work to

construct and are constructed by male-dominated hierarchies. As Mowl and Towner (1995) point out, these hierarchies influence what can be done in these spaces by determining ‘what is considered to be appropriate and acceptable behaviour’ (p.106). They also serve to ‘define who has the right to be in a particular space or who may be seen to be “out of place”’ (Beal & Wilson, 2004, p.8). This line of inquiry allows for an understanding of the ways hierarchies organized by social differences subsequently impact upon the ways the young men and women in my study come to constitute their subjectivities in relation to the dividing practices deployed in basketball spaces.

To engage with this mode of analysis, I turn to a body of leisure studies literature that explores the ways social hierarchies operating in spaces systematically work to objectify, ‘normalize’, and exclude individuals constituted as the ‘Other’ (Aitchison, 1999, 2001; Mowl & Towner, 1995; Scraton, 1994; Scraton & Watson, 1998; Shogan, 2002). In particular, these researchers rely upon poststructural analyses in order to reveal the sets of discourses and power networks that work to (re)produce and legitimize particular forms of subjectivities (Aitchison, 2001). This literature specifically demonstrates that most leisure and physical activity spaces have become appropriated by heterosexual males and come to be discursively encoded in ways that privilege and (re)produce heterosexual forms of masculinity. In this way, a patriarchal social order is established in these spaces whereby heterosexual males come to exist as the ‘norm’, whilst those considered to be the ‘Other’ (females and gay males) are systematically marginalized and/or excluded.

This understanding that leisure and sport spaces work to (re)produce male power has also been considered by sport sociologists investigating the cultures of rugby, skateboarding, basketball, football, and boxing (Beal, 1996, Beal & Wilson, 2004; Messner, 1990b; Sabo, 1994; Schacht, 1996; Woodward, 2004). In his study of rugby, for instance, Schacht (1996) has drawn from the understanding that masculinity is ‘inherently relational’ in order to demonstrate that male rugby players come to take up and (re)produce hegemonic masculine subjectivities by

dominating and deriding 'the done-to, women and less privileged men' (p.551). In this way, the rugby pitch becomes the 'the real estate on which men construct, exercise, and prove the significance of their being' (p.551). In another example, Beal (1996) has demonstrated how spaces significantly impact upon the culture of skateboarding and simultaneously work to (re)produce and maintain complex power relations that privilege dominant forms of masculinity. In Beal's work, the males took up dominant positions of power in skateboard spaces by 'differentiating and elevating themselves from females and femininity' (1996, p.204).

The previous discussion highlights the ways sport and physical activity spaces work to (re)produce hegemonic masculinities through the subjugation and exclusion of marginalized forms of masculinity and femininity. Yet, the impacts of 'race', diaspora, and 'ethnicity' upon the processes of masculine self-formation have remained largely under-theorized. The spatial processes that work to (re)produce various forms of 'non-white' masculinities have been rarely addressed by sport sociologists and leisure studies researchers. Several sport sociologists and geographers have addressed the discursive relations between 'race', 'ethnicity', subjectivity, and sport space by investigating the discursive constructions of 'whiteness' in sport locker rooms (Fusco, 2005), English identities in cricket grounds and sport stadiums (Bale, 1994, 2003), as well as diasporic Indian identities in cricket grounds (Appadurai, 1996; Madan, 2000). While this literature describes the existence of social and spatial processes that serve to constitute 'racial' and 'ethnic' subjectivities, this work does not address the specific social practices and power relations operating in urban spaces that create and maintain 'racial', 'ethnic' *and* gendered subjectivities. One example from the field of leisure studies that does address this line of inquiry is Scraton and Watson's (1998) work on the construction of South Asian feminine subjectivities in urban leisure spaces. They describe how South Asian women negotiate their urban spaces and come to invest in particular meanings and subjectivities made available to them in their spatial encounters. On the basis of their study they argue that leisure spaces within postmodern cities are

simultaneously gendered, racialized, and sexualized and work to (re)produce specific relations of power that are constitutive of complex and contradictory subjectivities.

In the next section I extend my analysis of social space by engaging with the ways symbolic or cultural ideologies related to a 'hoop dream' directly work through basketball spaces to constitute masculine subjectivities and (re)produce gendered hierarchies. Hanson and Pratt (1995) suggest that socially-constructed desires and aspirations (such as the 'hoop dream') are (re)produced within certain physical activity spaces and work to constitute particular discursive subjectivities. This perspective will underpin my investigation of how the young 'black' men living in urban impoverished areas come to invest in 'black' masculinities by negotiating their discursive positioning as the 'athletic' or 'criminal' 'Other' in their spatial encounters.

THE SPATIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE 'BLACK' MASCULINE 'OTHER'

I now turn to investigate the ways discursive constructions of the 'at-risk' and 'dangerous' urban 'black' male 'Other' directly affect how the young men in my study use their neighborhood basketball spaces and take up hegemonic and subordinated masculine subjectivities. This requires a discussion around the ways dividing practices work in spaces to establish "norms" and deviants, centres and margins, cores and peripheries, the powerful and the powerless" (Aitchison, 1999, p.31) in relation to dominant binary categorizations of 'black'/white, rich/poor, male/female, and strong/weak.

A recent body of literature has demonstrated that discursive processes of 'othering' work to provide young men with forms of 'black' masculinities that are linked with individual empowerment and the acquisition of fame and wealth (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Cole, 1995, 1996; Cole & King, 1998; Hokuwhitu, 2003). In particular, it has been argued that the discursive construction of an African-American or 'black' 'Other' serves to reify hopeless sport dreams and 'fixate people of colour into roles acceptable to a social narrative of normalcy'

(Hokuwhitu, 2003, p.30). At the same time, the ‘othering’ process works to legitimize the role of whites to be ‘safe keepers of civilised intelligence’ (p.29) and providers of ‘enlightened leadership’ (p.2). This suggests that in the context of urban basketball spaces, social practices work to constitute young ‘black’ men’s subjectivities in ways that reflect neo-liberal discourses of individual empowerment and choice. These discourses work to position these young men as the racialized urban ‘Other’, whilst simultaneously de-masculinizing and de-racing them so that they can become ‘normal’ and ‘productive’ citizens. To highlight the impacts of these ‘normalizing’ processes on the lives of the young ‘black’ men in my study, I turn to a set of literature that highlights the ways intersecting neo-liberal and popular culture discourses come to be deployed in basketball spaces. This literature demonstrates how in the urban context of basketball, these discourses work to constitute young men’s ‘black’ masculine subjectivities.

BASKETBALL AS HOPE, DREAMS, AND A SOCIAL IMPERATIVE FOR YOUNG ‘BLACK’ MEN

Ken Griffey, Jr. reiterated a familiar message of hope and possibility: ‘I had a dream that was to go out and play major league baseball. That’s what this basketball court is for – your dreams, whatever they are...’ (Cole, 1996, p.380)

How are we to understand the hopes, dreams, and knowledges disseminated in the name of sport? (Cole, 1996, p.381)

As Cole suggests in the above quotes, sport has been responsible for producing particular ‘hopes’ and ‘dreams’ that have led participants to believe in a better life. The belief that sport can save young ‘black’ men has been used by community leaders to justify the existence of interventionist sport and physical activity programs, particularly in poor urban areas. This follows a widely-held belief in sport to ‘properly socialize citizens to appropriate civic engagement, human interaction and, of course, productivity’ (Jamieson, 2003, p.6). Basketball spaces, in particular, are considered by many policy makers to work as ‘neutral safe

havens' and 'social equalizers' and provide young people with similar experiences and identities and increased life chances. For example, private and public sponsored sport programs such as 'Midnight Basketball' have been designed to '... target underserved youth, who are often referred to as disadvantaged, at-risk, Black, and inner-city youth...' (Pitter & Andrews, 1997, p.86). However, basketball spaces have been implicated by several researchers as reifying 'racial' and class inequalities and simultaneously (re)producing an Anglo-centric middle class *ethos* of social intervention and individual empowerment. This point is argued by Pitter and Andrews (1997):

[analysis reveals] two distinct streams of recreation provision bounded by racial and class identities and spatial location in metropolitan America. One stream is a White, suburban, middle class, commodified recreation provision, a means to healthy bodies and their associated status. In the other stream, we find recreation intervention, a means primarily to protect the suburban dweller from the 'urban other' and secondarily to empower those urban others. (p.93)

This comment illustrates how recreation providers have created a 'racial' bifurcation whereby sport and physical activity is offered as a means to 'empower' 'black' urban youth, meanwhile existing as a source of leisure and health for white middle class youth. This means that '(i)n the context of urban America, sport is not about kids' play and bodily movement, but a moral and normative imperative' (Cole, 1996, p.388). Cole makes the crucial point that while sport in the inner-city is provided under the pretext of social intervention and individual empowerment, it actually operates as a mechanism 'to regulate, discipline, and police already deviant bodies in urban areas' (p. 388). Within inner-city areas of the United States, it is often 'black' male bodies that are encoded as being deviant and dangerous as the criminal/athletic 'Other'. Drawing from a body of sociology of sport literature (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Cole, 1995, 1996; Cole & King, 1998; Hokuwhitu, 2003), I suggest that under the guise of 'social responsibility', powerful social imperatives work through urban sport and

physical activity spaces to (re)produce dichotomous categorizations of ‘race’ that serve to produce and delimit ‘black’ subjectivities.

In his concept of ‘representations of space’, Lefevre (1991) makes the claim that space is not simply a material or objectified location, but is also constituted by and constitutive of a broader set of cultural representations. Thus, from this position, the ways subjects come to engage with spaces through their bodies is shaped by their thoughts, memories, and imaginations. From this understanding of representations of space, leisure studies researcher David Crouch (2000) comments that individuals simultaneously activate, influence, and negotiate local and wider spaces, social contexts, and cultural representations in order to construct their subjectivities. They actively rework and negotiate popular culture through their encounters with leisure spaces. In this way ‘popular culture is made and remade through what people “do”, a process rather than a product’ (p.64). This perspective suggests a mode of spatial inquiry that engages with the ways popular media and cultural representations work to construct a ‘naturally’ athletic and/or pathological ‘black’ male ‘Other’. Andrews (1996b), for instance, argues that popular media stereotypes have positioned ‘black’ urban male youth as being both pathologically criminal, hyper-sexual, and naturally athletic. These racist encodings are linked to widely-held assumptions about the innate physicality, moral laxity, and hyper-sexuality of ‘black’ male bodies, which can be traced back to the slavery era.

SPACE AND POST-INDUSTRIAL/POSTMODERN REPRESENTATIONS OF ‘BLACK’ MASCULINITY

In the context of the postmodern age, young people can be seen as living in a world that is characterized by diversity, variety, and heterogeneity and the continual construction of ‘new identities, new cultural practices, new family configurations, and new communities’ (Besley, 2003, p.165). The significance of this view is that the young ‘black’ men in my study engage with a multivalent postmodern basketball culture that provides them with multiple and shifting meanings and subjectivities. In developing this perspective, I demonstrate how these engagements with a symbolic postmodern culture often take place or

become embodied when the young men use their urban basketball spaces, which have been encoded with the knowledges and values emanating from ‘*new culture industries*’ such as Nike (Andrews, 1996b, p.316, author’s emphasis).

A crucial mode of analysis thus involves describing the meanings and subjectivities taken up by the young men who use basketball courts laden with Nike ‘swoosh’ symbols, wear Nike-sponsored clothing and shoes, and watch Nike television commercials³⁵. It has been argued by Cole (1996) that the Nike ‘swoosh’ has worked to imbue the ‘black’ male ‘Other’ with notions of individual empowerment and civic responsibility through the mass marketing of mantras such as ‘Just Do It’ and the promotion of ‘self-made’ ‘black’ male athletes such as Michael Jordan. From this perspective, logos such as the Nike ‘swoosh’ have been taken up by ‘black’ males as a means to garner and wield ‘social power’ (Baudrilard, 1988; Bishop, 2001). In relation to the widespread popularity of the Nike ‘swoosh’ and the success of Nike athletes, Bishop (2001) argues that ‘(w)e consume this success; this makes up doubly successful’ (p.24). This suggests that young ‘black’ males who come to understand themselves as the ‘black’ racialized ‘Other’ invest in a commodified culture of basketball in relation to their desires for success and power. Drawing from this perspective, an important point of analysis will be to understand how this desire for success and power works to create particular ‘black’ masculine subjectivities and specific gender orders in basketball spaces.

Two critical questions emerge from the previous discussion of literature in this chapter: How might the young ‘black’ men come to invest in the masculine subjectivities made available to them by neo-liberal sport cultures and symbolic/culture industries? How do the young ‘black’ men take up and maintain hegemonic masculine subjectivities by ‘differentiating and elevating themselves’

³⁵ Cole (1995) notes the prevalence of these cultural symbols in the American psyche: ‘the Nike swoosh, the directive “Just Do It”, and Nike signature advertisements are, indeed, everywhere’ (p.347).

(Beal, 1996, p.204) from other males and females? These questions will be used to frame the analysis for this chapter.

YOUNG MEN'S USE OF BASKETBALL SPACES: MASCULINITIES AND SOCIAL HIERARCHIES

The literature discussed in the introduction to this chapter points to the ways the culture of basketball and the spaces where basketball is played are interconnected with the (re)production of masculine subjectivities. To examine the impacts of basketball in the lives of the young men in my study, I draw from four interviews conducted with each member of the cohort where they discussed their use of urban physical activity spaces. As mentioned in Chapter Three, in these interviews the young people were asked to describe which local spaces they used during one week in the summer and one week during the school session. The young people were also asked to outline their reasons for choosing certain spaces over others and to describe their experiences within their preferred spaces. City maps featuring parks, schools, streets, and playing fields were used during interviews to help young people reconstruct their physical activity movements.

By examining the young people's descriptions of their neighborhood spaces and particularly their use of the local parks and 'open gyms', it became evident that the young people in the study felt that these spaces, in particular, had a distinctive pattern of use. In each park or 'open gym' space the young people described how certain participants were able to participate in physical activity, while others were not allowed to use these spaces. This was particularly evident in the larger parks such as Linwood, Willow, Spring, and Rafferty which all contained refurbished Nike basketball courts. These parks have large grass areas and baseball diamonds which were sometimes used by the young men and women for activities such as running and soccer. However, many of the young men in my study who played soccer often went outside the southwest neighborhoods (usually to Corning Park which has several manicured grass fields and even a multi-million dollar artificial turf field) because there are very few goal posts or marked fields in these parks. The soccer fields that do exist in these parks are often neglected and remain in poor condition. Skateboarders and scooter and bike riders often use the park

sidewalks (Spring Park has an empty pool that is popular with skateboarders and bike riders). Many of the young women expressed their reluctance to use the park spaces, even just to ‘hang out’ or ‘chill’ with friends. This reticence to use the parks was often based on their opinions that the parks were unsafe, inhabited primarily by young ‘black’ men (called ‘crackheads’ by Irene) who cause trouble, and that the parks were too far away. This reservation about using the parks for physical activity and sport is evident in the following exchange with Maureen:

- Matt: What do you think about Spring Park?
Maureen: It is a park that I would not want to ‘kick it’³⁶ at.
Matt: Tell me why?
Maureen: Because it is a ghetto³⁷.
Matt: What does that mean, tell me.
Maureen: Because I just don’t think there is anything hot about it. Everybody just goes there to just kick it and usually the same people all the time. All the people that go there they go to Thom [high school]; there is nothing going on. I don’t think I would just go to that park just to chill like as a habit, like my favorite spot to just chill, because I just don’t think there is anything tight³⁸ about it.
Matt: Have you had any problems there?
Maureen: No, never.
Matt: So what do you mean it’s a ghetto, what does that mean?
Maureen: Like I said all those people that you see every day in school they are just there and people would be just fighting over stupid stuff and I think it is stupid. So I wouldn’t want to go to a park like that.
Matt: Do you go to any other parks?
Maureen: No.
Matt: How come?
Maureen: I’m too old for that.
Matt: But when you lived at Maxwell Street?
Maureen: No.
Matt: Like Linwood Park, Rafferty Park
Maureen: No. No because it was not close by me because Spring was really close by me and all the other parks you had to catch a bus to get there. So no.

³⁶ ‘Kick it’ means to ‘hang out’.

³⁷ Maureen’s reference to ‘ghetto’ implies that Spring Park is primarily inhabited by African-Americans from Thompson High School who embody ‘poor taste’ and cause trouble. As I have maintained throughout this thesis, Maureen uses the depiction of African-American culture as ‘ghetto’ in order to distinguish her self as being a ‘ethnic’ ‘black’ young woman.

³⁸ In this quote ‘tight’ means worthwhile or desirable.

While the young men and women who participated in running, dancing, soccer, and ‘wheeled’ physical activities such as skateboarding and scootering rarely used the park spaces, it was evident through their spatial descriptions that the young ‘black’ men who played basketball used the park spaces extensively. A possible explanation for why many of the non-basketball playing participants did not think ‘there was anything hot’ about the parks could be that non-basketball physical activities were not catered for by park recreation providers – in these spaces there are no skate ramps, no outdoor dance theatres, and very poor soccer facilities. In contrast, all of the major parks in southwest Springfield have basketball courts that were recently rebuilt and are now in good working condition. This suggests that basketball is set up as the ideal physical activity for people using the neighborhood parks in southwest Springfield.

Because several of the young men in my study use the park and ‘open gym’ spaces to play basketball, their descriptions provide a window into the ways these spaces (re)produced particular discursive hierarchies based around masculine subjectivities. In particular, I have chosen to look at basketball because while it is idealized as an egalitarian sport within this community, it most clearly articulates the ways urban sport spaces (re)produce social inequalities. I suggest that these spaces provide the young men with differentiated masculine subjectivities and positions of power. Also, these spaces act as sites of masculine hierarchies which often serve to exclude the young women primarily on the basis of their gender. As such, it is the use of the park and ‘open gym’ spaces that will be analyzed in this chapter.

To begin this investigation I now describe how two young ‘black’ men, Adam and Neal, are able to garner considerable ‘cultural capital’ through basketball because they are most closely aligned with the dominant discursive fields operating in their urban basketball spaces. Based on their spatial descriptions, Adam and Neal demonstrate that, because they are considered to be highly capable ‘black’ male basketball players, they have access to all park and ‘open gym’ basketball spaces

and can decide who gets to play in these areas. They are able to play at all times of the day and can move in unrestricted ways throughout southwest Springfield. To develop my argument that masculine hierarchies emerge and are sustained in these urban basketball spaces, I subsequently contrast their ability to ‘run’ the basketball spaces with commentary from several others who are systematically excluded from using these spaces.

‘LET’S RUN IT’: THE (RE)PRODUCTION OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES IN BASKETBALL SPACES

Adam and Neal are two African-American young men who were 15 years old when they entered my thesis study. At the time of writing both these young men were 18 years old and preparing to accept college and university basketball scholarships in the following year. They play basketball for the state championship contending Thompson High School varsity team in the winter and spring, and then in the summer they play for elite club programs which travel to prestigious tournaments across the United States. The following exchanges from their interviews illustrate the ways masculine hierarchies are manifest in the park and ‘drop in’ basketball spaces. In particular, the young men’s talk illustrates how their embodied capacity to dominate and exclude other young men and women affords them greater levels of cultural capital and power. From this position, they are able to construct and maintain sets of social practices in which their subjectivities are ascendant. I contend that the young men’s ability to sustain this hegemonic status is integrally linked to the practices associated with neo-liberal discourses espoused by their communities and basketball spaces. Organizations and companies such as ‘Midnight Basketball’ and Nike that stress individual ‘empowerment through sport’ maintain a strong presence in the lives of these young men. As such, they play a crucial role in setting up the conditions whereby African-American young men such as Neal and Adam invest in hegemonic ‘black’ masculine subjectivities and construct gendered hierarchies.

On a Friday in the summertime Adam and Neal get out of bed around 12:30 pm (Adam often spends the night at Neal’s house) and then ride their bikes to a friend’s house to ‘hang out’. Together, they play video games, talk to people on

the phone, and watch television. Other times they will walk from their friend's house across the street to Spring Park and shoot the basketball around. In the following exchange Neal describes the basketball scene at Spring Park. What is critical here is how he positions the other young men as being 'weak' because they are incapable of providing a legitimate form of competition. This points to the ways Neal takes up a hegemonic masculine subjectivity that is constituted by his embodied capacity to dominate other young men in the majority of southwest Springfield basketball spaces.

From Neal:

- Matt: Um, and then you hang out until about 4 o'clock, play video games, and then which park, say it's Monday, where would you go to?
- Neal: Like at first, most of the time we'll go across the street and shoot around for a little bit...
- Matt: And where is that?
- Neal: At Spring, for a little bit.
- Matt: So at Spring, where the (outdoor) court's at...
- Neal: Yeah... and then, we'll all ride our bikes over to... Rafferty.
- Matt: Okay, so at Spring you shoot around a little bit,
- Neal: Yeah...
- Matt: And, uh, how come you don't play at Spring?
- Neal: 'Cause, nobody be there... nobody be there... and people that be there be weak... we want to play some competition.

While Adam and Neal are at Spring Park, their friends will later call them (their friends are usually teammates) to say that Rafferty Park is 'cracking'³⁹ that afternoon. The news spreads through this informal phone network and Adam, Neal, and their friends will ride their bikes over to Rafferty Park, which is considered the hotspot for park basketball players in Springfield. By 4:30 pm these parks will have 'two courts full' of people playing basketball in 'five on five' games, with large crowds ringing the courts. The crowds are considered important by Neal and Adam because they help to motivate them to perform better

³⁹ 'Cracking' is used in this context to denote a space which has lots of people participating in basketball games and a good crowd atmosphere.

which creates a better training environment. The crowds watching outside the courts come to simulate the pressures of the ‘big game’. As Neal describes in the exchange below, the crowd spurs on those players who are ‘doing good’, but can turn on those who make mistakes or get ‘beat’ by other players. For Neal, play at Rafferty Park is about getting ‘crunk’⁴⁰ by physically dominating the other young men in the basketball games and having the crowd acknowledge his superior position of power.

From Neal:

- Matt Is the crowd important to you?
Neal: Yeah. The crowd. I like the crowd.
Matt: Why do you like the crowd?
Neal: Because like, if you get, it’s like, I don’t know, like ‘cause they get you ‘crunk’ like if you doing good and then the crowd all like ‘oohhh’ then you want to keep doing good and stuff like that, but if you doin’ bad, the crowd make you do worse, ‘cause like if you get ‘crossed’⁴¹ or something like that, you wanna get the person back so the crowd be on your side again. And like when there’s a crowd people like try to get the crowd on they side.

Because Rafferty Park provides young men such as Neal and Adam with the highest level of competition and the most discerning crowds it is preferred over other park spaces. Neal and Adam are easily able to ‘run the courts’ in parks such as Spring and Linwood because there is little competition. While I contend throughout this chapter that these other parks are also encoded as masculine spaces, they are unable to sustain the particular self-formation processes that the young men require in order to exist in their dominant positions of power. In order for the young men to stake a claim around a hierarchically pre-eminent masculine subjectivity, I argue that they have to continually prove their superior basketball playing talent within the most competitive spaces. The state of feeling ‘crunk’ is most actualized when the young men are able to satisfy their desire of physically

⁴⁰ ‘Crunk’ means to be in a heightened state of excitement or feeling crazy.

⁴¹ Getting ‘crossed’ is to get beat by someone doing a ‘crossover’ dribbling move.

dominating other young men which serves to legitimate their superior positions of power.

On Fridays, after playing at Rafferty Park until 7:30 pm, Neal and Adam ride their bikes to another friend's house near Peachtree Boulevard and 'hang out'. Then around 8:30 pm they leave their bikes and walk over to the nearby Boys and Girls Club. They shoot the basketball around in the gymnasium with mostly younger kids, and then at midnight they go over to the 'Midnight Basketball'⁴² program at the Salvation Army community center (known locally as 'The Salvo'). Adam and Neal play in the 'Midnight Basketball' program at the Salvation Army until it closes down at 2 am and then they walk back to their friend's house and subsequently ride their bikes back to Neal's house. The level of competition at 'The Salvo' is high because many older and more physically stronger players are there. Similar to Rafferty Park, the Salvation Army court space is considered desirable by Adam and Neal because it offers a high level of competition and the chance to play 'harder' in front of a discerning crowd. As such, this highly-competitive space also provides young men such as Adam and Neal with the opportunity to legitimate and display a hegemonic masculine subjectivity that is linked to their superior basketball talent. As I argue later, this hegemonic masculine subjectivity, based around playing the 'hardest' and trying to do the 'best', is achieved by excluding many others from using these spaces, and is directly linked with the operation of powerful notions of individual empowerment and choice.

From Neal:

Neal: If there's a lot of people at the park then, you want to play good. You just want to do good, so you just have everybody

⁴² Midnight Basketball was originally developed in 1986 and was designed as a means to keep young black males off the inner-city streets, since it was assumed that they would either be committing crimes or be victims of criminal activities during later hours (Pitter & Andrews, 1997). Pitter and Andrews note that '(i)t is now being suggested that many of today's youth only can be reached and helped by new programs such as Midnight Basketball' (p.89).

- like ‘oohhh’ and do like that’s when you, that’s when I want to just like dunk more and try to do different stuff.
- Matt: Uh, huh...
- Neal: Play your hardest, when there’s a lot of people I play harder. And like at Salvation Army I got to play my hardest ‘cause it’s like stronger people and like, they like sometimes, mostly they better than me, but, you know I love showing you know, I just play hard, you know, and try to do my best.

As demonstrated in this quote and argued previously, Neal highly values an embodied capacity to ‘play hard’ in sport because it is linked with a masculine subjectivity that is achieved through physical strength and domination. In all the previous exchanges Adam and Neal describe competition levels in various southwest parks and ‘open gym’ spaces as being the determining factor for where they choose to play basketball. What can be construed from these quotes is that these ‘informal’ court spaces serve as off-season training grounds from which these young men can exercise their dominance over the other males around them. The codes and rules of park and ‘open gym’ basketball (less foul calling and winning teams stay on the court) provides top level players, such as Adam and Neal, with the opportunity to improve their basketball skills which simultaneously reinforces their hegemonic status. In so doing, the courts work primarily as sites for their off-season training regimens. While Adam and Neal often play in the parks and ‘open gyms’ in the summer, they are primarily concerned with winning (‘running the court’) and getting themselves and their team mates (they usually play with their team mates in the park) ready for upcoming institutional competitions. This notion that playing basketball in the parks is ‘just practice’ for the more highly-regarded high school and club competitions becomes evident in the following two excerpts from Neal and Adam.

From Neal:

- Matt: How do you feel about park basketball, street basketball, compared to say the high school team or your club team?
- Neal: Street basketball to me, is better, for me, it helps me out with my high school basketball ‘cause I’m tryin’ to get stronger people (to play against), and you know, better people, quicker,

you know they got more handles and jumping so, I gotta play extra hard and extra strong 'cause you can't really call a foul so you gotta just play up, so, you know, I work on my shot, when I get fouled if the referee don't call it, I still knock the shot down, you know, I still keep playing without calls from the referee and that helps me in my high school that's helpin' me with my high school, you know, so I, I won't be lookin' for the ref to bail me out I just keep playin'.

From Adam and Neal:

- Matt: Do you think about the parks, do you think about playing in the different places?
- Neal: I think, when I think I think about playing in the game. I don't really think about playing in the park.
- Adam: I don't think about playing in the park. Playing in the park is just for fun, but, I mean just for practice really. It's just practice and then when you get in the game that's real.

Playing in the institutional 'games' provides these young men with even more community visibility and the opportunity to be scouted by college and university coaches throughout the United States. In this way these competitions come to be seen as 'real' because they further enhance the young men's superior positions of power within the masculine culture of basketball and in the southwest Springfield community. Being a 'star' basketball player in southwest Springfield also affords them with tremendous amounts of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) within their schools and neighborhoods – they are profiled in the city newspaper, get free Nike gear from the high school, easily obtain summer coaching jobs, and take sponsored trips all across the United States to play in All-Star tournaments.

By 'practicing' in the parks and playing in the 'real' competitive high school and club games, these young men take up hegemonic masculine subjectivities within the hierarchies of basketball and in their local community. These subjectivities are based around becoming 'extra strong', extremely tough, training 'extra hard', and, as I will argue further, the exclusion, demeaning, and subordination of other young men and nearly all young women. Because Adam and Neal are very capable players and choose to play with their highly-talented high school team

mates, they are often able to ‘run’ the courts in a variety of park spaces. ‘Running the court’ is directly tied to the use of a system of picking teams called ‘next’, a practice described in the next section, which systematically serves to exclude those who are judged to lack skill and talent from using the ‘informal’ park and ‘drop in’ basketball courts.

‘I GOT “NEXT”’: SYSTEMATIC WAYS OF MAINTAINING THE SOCIAL HIERARCHIES OF BASKETBALL

While Adam and Neal can pick and choose their use of the parks and courts, there are a variety of practices associated with these ‘informal’ basketball spaces that work as codes to regulate who gets to play basketball. In these spaces there are systematic ways of organizing patterns of use that are primarily enforced by players such as Adam and Neal, who have access to more privileged positions of power because they most closely resemble the culturally idealized masculinities within their communities that are linked with sporting prowess and physical competition amongst men. The practice of calling ‘next’ determines who can use the basketball space at any given time. While a game is being played, players who show up to the court call out ‘next’ or ‘down’ to reserve their spot in a future game. Whoever makes this call will wait on the sideline until the game in progress is concluded, and then it becomes their turn to pick a team that will play the winners for the right to stay on the court. Players whose abilities are perceived by the person with ‘next’ privileges to be inadequate are unlikely to get to play because they will not get picked for a team. In this way many young people are excluded from using park basketball spaces. This exclusion seems to not only be based straightforwardly on skill but to have both a ‘racial’ and gender dimension. However, the young men whom I interviewed wanted to make it clear to me that ‘race’ was not an issue.

I argue that this ‘colorblind’ position that is taken up by the young men is shaped by community programs such as Midnight Basketball and multi-national corporations such as the National Basketball Association and Nike, who have deployed a set of neo-liberal practices and knowledge in order to create an urban culture of basketball where seemingly all ‘ballplayers, young and old, male and

female, black, white, and other' (Abdel-Shehid, 2005, p.100) can play. For instance, Thornton (2003) argues in his study of a '3 on 3' basketball tournament in Toronto that urban basketball spaces are deliberately set up by the local professional basketball team in ways that erase "racial" politics' whilst (re)producing the notion that these spaces are egalitarian, nonracial, and multicultural. In this way the culture of inner-city basketball is seen as 'helping to bring together players from all social backgrounds' (p.269) which instills the belief amongst participants that '(o)n the court, players are all the same, and all that counts is that one cares about playing the game' (p.269).

The comments from the African-American young men in my study suggest that the basketball courts in southwest Springfield have indeed been de-classed and de-raced. The young men (re)produce a particular form of morality that is linked with an individualistic and liberal-humanist 'hoop dream' that has currency in their neighborhoods. In this neo-conservative 'hoop dream, 'the nightmares of racism, police brutality, and class exploitation (p.104) have been supplanted by the belief that within an integrationist (e.g. class and 'color' blind) and redemptive culture of urban 'pick-up' basketball, young 'black' males who buy into the values of hard work and determination can 'make it'.

I argue that the use of 'next' and other means of picking teams makes explicit the ways the African-American young men (re)produce this neo-liberal 'hoop dream' morality through basketball. The young men's beliefs and social practices indicate that they have been de-politicized through their engagements with the wider cultural discourses surrounding basketball. I argue that their understandings of themselves and those around them are directly shaped by the discursive re-inscription of inner-city basketball spaces in relation to 'white paranoias' (Abdel-Shehid, 2005) whereby the linkage of basketball and 'blackness' in the inner-city parks is considered to be a 'source of trouble' by the white middle class (p.100). From this perspective, basketball has been appropriated and transformed by community groups and multi-national corporations from a sport associated with 'racial' and class difference, to one where African-American young men can be

‘civilized’ and ‘de-raced’ by learning the values of white middle class America (Thornton, 2003). As Abdel-Shehid (2005) suggests, the intention is to imbue ‘deviant’ ‘black’ males with a morality rooted in middle class values of self-improvement and individual choice. From this perspective, I argue that the southwest park basketball spaces have been transformed from racialized sites where ‘black’ male ‘gangsterism’ (White & Cones III, 1999, p.72) used to prevail in the 1990s into spaces representing white middle class values of meritocracy and individualism, through community and corporate investment into these spaces. For instance, Nike has appropriated and commodified these park courts, as evidenced in the implanting of the ‘swoosh’ on the courts. In so doing, Nike has re-aligned these spaces to fit with their de-radicalized values of egalitarianism, self-improvement, and ‘making the right choice’ in relation to the culture of sport. By engaging with Nike, both materially on the courts and metaphorically through their physical culture engagements, these young men have become de-politicized and choose to ignore any notions of ‘racial’ difference. For instance, in the next quote Ricky, a 16 year old African-American male who also played for Thompson High School, describes how he believes that perceived physical capabilities, rather than ‘race’, is the primary criteria for team selection:

- Matt: So a lot people from all over go up there [to Rafferty Park]?
 Ricky: Yeah, all kinds of people go up there, all different kinds of races.
 Matt: Tell me about that.
 Ricky: Everyone goes to Rafferty for competition.
 Matt: So is it like blacks against whites?
 Ricky: No, no it’s not like that, it’s just whoever gets picked, like they always have to have a big guy, and a small point guard, like at Spring, I’m always on the court, cause they know me and I’m they know I’m fast, at Rafferty, you might get two games in, cause there’s always people up there.
 Matt: So are there some people that don’t play?
 Ricky: It might be, they might go up there to play, but they’ll be watching all day.

The following response from Adam, one of Ricky’s teammates, however, suggests that the reasons why they (the African-American players) do not play with other

groups is because of different ways of playing that have to do with 'race' and 'ethnicity':

- Matt: When you do your basketball, what other cultural backgrounds do you see in those spaces, like who else plays or who is in those places?
- Adam: Black or white usually, just black and white people.
- Matt: What about Rafferty, what is Rafferty like?
- Adam: Same thing or Mexicans, they'll be playing ten on ten instead of five and five.
- Matt: Do they play with you guys or?
- Adam: If it's Mexicans they just play with Mexicans, it's all Mexicans. If it's black and white you just play black, you play all black or either black or white people; usually black and white though.
- Matt: But you don't play with the Mexican people.
- Adam: No because they bring, when Mexicans play they bring their whole family to play. So they just play just their whole family; kids, everybody.

In another interview with Neal, I followed up on this theme of 'ethnic' and/or 'racial' difference by raising the issue of the Mexicans/Hispanics who often play at Rafferty Park:

- Matt: What about Hispanics or... ?
- Neal: They play; they don't play with us but they play though. They play on the other side of the court; they were deep too.
- Matt: What do you mean?
- Neal: They were playing ten on ten on a full court.
- Matt: How come they don't play on your court?
- Neal: Because there's different levels of basketball.
- Matt: Tell me about that.
- Neal: There is a level where you just play for fun and then there is a competitive level which is where I am at, I'm a competitor, like we're good so we compete with other good people to see who is going to win. That's why I don't play them because if they play they are going to lose every time. And they're short.

The 'black' young men above categorically dismiss the impacts of 'race' and 'ethnicity' in the exclusion of 'non-black' players in the games at Rafferty Park, or attribute their absence from the main basketball spaces to differences in ways of playing (and by implication an absence of interest on the part of others to

participate in their ways of playing). Neal, Adam, and Ricky advance the egalitarian notion that anyone who can play at a high level is allowed to be on the court. Neal, for instance, advances a neo-liberal ‘colorblind’ position when he says ‘I hope there’s nothing like that [tension and discrimination], over race or anything. When you have the ball I think you forget all about that, you are just trying to win. So I don’t see any of that’. Yet, because playing park basketball is fundamentally linked with the off-season training of these African-American men pursuing their community-supported ‘hoop dreams’, members of most ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ groups are excluded or do not try to play.

The comments from Adam and Neal, in particular, demonstrate that only those ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ groups who are considered to be physically capable of performing in the highly-competitive ‘five on five’ games are allowed to play with the African-American males. Whites (most likely males) are allowed to play on the park courts, presumably because they have the requisite physical characteristics and abilities to compete (many of the best Springfield high school programs have predominantly white players). ‘Mexicans’, however, are considered by the African-American players to be more interested in playing with their families and playing in less-competitive games of ‘ten on ten’. Because they are seemingly more family-oriented, playing ‘for fun’, and are also considered to be physically shorter in stature, they are therefore seen as being less able to compete with players such as Adam and Neal (e.g. ‘they are going to lose every time’). Furthermore, as Neal says, ‘there’s different levels of basketball’ – at Rafferty Park, where competition is high and places on teams are at a premium, the ability to perform on the basketball court provides access to the games. By positioning the ‘Mexicans’ as physically inferior (‘they’re short’) and playing for ‘fun’, Adam, Neal, and Ricky position themselves as superior because of their physical strength and athletic superiority.

I argue through this description of a ‘racial’ hierarchy, whereby primarily ‘blacks’ and a few whites (Neal says that ‘It’s mostly African-Americans but I’d say ninety percent African-Americans and ten percent white’) are allowed to play, that it is

not a case of ‘just whoever’ that gets to play on the courts, even though this belief is powerfully promoted by companies such as Nike. Rather, in these spaces physical capability is directly equated with one’s ‘racial’ background. Thus, who gets to play *is* directly related to ‘racial’ distinctions and discrimination. While the young men advance a ‘colorblind’ ideal that dovetails easily with a neo-liberal egalitarianism that is widely-established and appropriated by community and corporate sport groups, the young men’s statements suggest that there is a hierarchy, dominated by the young ‘black’ males, that exists inside the urban parks.

The commentary from the ‘black’ young men suggests that it is the practice of ‘next’ that powerfully determines who gets to play on the courts, and therefore who is afforded dominant and subordinate masculinities. ‘Next’ is the manifestation of the egalitarian ideals which have been transplanted into the basketball courts. Further demonstrating the powerful ways these liberal-humanist ideals have been taken up by the young people, ‘next’ has been extensively appropriated and deployed by the young men in my study. They conceptualize ‘next’ as being a locus of power which can be held and exercised by all the young people in the basketball space, so that everyone gets to play. However, the ways ‘next’ is deployed within the basketball courts indicates that this system is inscribed and deployed in ways that (re)produce hegemonic forms of power, structured along the lines of ‘race’. It is only the most talented and physically dominant African-American males, not the Hispanics/Mexicans or the majority of whites, who use and get picked through ‘next’. In this way ‘next’ operates as a dividing practice within the park courts. To further draw out the social practices by which positions of power are afforded only to those African-American males with greater perceived physical abilities, I will now present the experiences described by John, a young African-American male who does not have a substantial basketball playing pedigree but who still expressed a desire to play in the parks.

‘WE’LL BE KILLIN’ THEM’: DIVIDING PRACTICES THAT SERVE TO EXCLUDE ‘OTHER’ YOUNG MEN

Leisure is thus an area of social conflict; the pleasure of one becomes the discomfort of another. (Mowl & Towner, 1995, p.112)

The rhetoric of ‘informal’ urban basketball as being an ‘equal opportunity’ and ‘colorblind’ sport is particularly evident in southwest Springfield and taken up by those ‘black’ young men who are most talented, and thus are most favored in the neo-liberal context of self-improvement. However, the story of John further demonstrates the artificiality of the egalitarian discourse that pervades sport because it supports the claim that dividing practices within park basketball spaces serve to objectify and exclude many young men. It also demonstrates that these young men, who all consider themselves to be ‘black’ young male athletes, are actually located by discursive systems of power in very different ways from each other, further suggesting the existence of ‘racial’ masculine hierarchies that produce multiple forms of masculinity.

John is an African-American male who was 15 years old when he became involved in my study. John lives close to Willow Park and dreams of playing in the professional National Football League. John is physically much shorter than Adam, Neal, and Ricky and has a stockier body build. He does not play for the Thompson High School basketball team (it is extremely unlikely that he would get picked) but instead plays for the junior varsity football team. During the summer he also enjoys playing basketball with his friends. In the following excerpt John talks about avoiding Spring Park and Linwood Park and how he would prefer to play basketball in Willow Park which is close to his home.

From John:

Matt: What do you think about Spring (Park)?
John: It’s cool, but it’s not like Willow (Park).
Matt: What do you mean?
John: My peers are at Willow, it’s a different crowd there.

Matt: So you're unfamiliar with those people, how does that make you feel?

John: You can't talk trash that much 'cause someone might pull out a 'heater' or something.

Matt: Say that again...

John: Someone might pull out a gun or something.

Matt: Has that ever happened to you?

John: Someone shot at my friends.

Matt: Where did that happen?

John: Linwood (Park).

Matt: Tell me about that.

John: My homeboy, he's kind of big, he was posting up, he turned around and slammed on a dude, and fell on top of him, and was like 'Aaaahhhh you can't let me do that man' and the guy was like 'whatever, do that again and I'll smoke you' and he told him he was going to smoke him.

Matt: Does that influence why you don't go to Linwood?

John: A little bit, gangstas are at Linwood all the time, trouble over there.

John avoids going to Spring Park and Linwood Park⁴³ because he does not know the people in these spaces and he is worried about his safety. This is a much different scenario compared to established neighborhood basketball players such as Adam, Neal, and Ricky. These types of confrontations and safety issues were not found in the interviews with these young men. This lack of concern on the part of the more high-profile and talented players is made evident in the following exchange with Neal.

From Neal:

Matt: Tell about that, they [the gangsters] don't mess with you because it's your life, because you play basketball.

Neal: Yeah, 'cause like, we play in the park and we'll play against 'em and we'll, we'll be killin' them, and they be like 'oh, he goood' and then they talk to us and tell us like stories about them and how they used to be good and stuff that like that so we get to know 'em better. And then like, if we have problems

⁴³ Between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s Linwood Park was the 'turf' line between the 'Willow Park Bloods' and the 'Piccadilly Street Crips' gangs and was considered to be a very dangerous park. Recent shootings on successive days in July, 2005 next to Linwood Park show that this can still be an unsafe space.

with somebody then they just be like ‘don’t mess with him’ and stuff like that so we really don’t got no enemies by hoopin.’

Because Adam and Neal are known as good players they are not harassed by gang members and are actually supported by them – one Springfield Southwest Precinct police officer told me that many of the gang members in these parks want to be ‘ballers’ (skilled basketball players) too. While John is constrained from using Linwood and Spring Parks because of the gang members, Adam and Neal point out that they would not even want to play in these parks because of the lack of competition.

From Adam and Neal:

- Matt: Okay, Adam, you were saying you like Rafferty better (than Linwood Park) – how come?
- Adam: I like Rafferty better because there’s more competition and just older people up there. So, it’s like, more competition. I like playing against older people.
- Matt: Why do you like playing against older people? They’re bigger...?
- Adam: They’re bigger and stronger, there’s more competition.
- Matt: Uh, huh...
- Neal: We be killin’ people our age (at Linwood Park).

As argued for earlier in the chapter, the park courts primarily serve as a training ground for people like Adam, Neal, and Ricky to improve their basketball abilities – these spaces are an extension of elite boy’s club and high school teams. Because these young men have high levels of ability and more physical strength they are able to maintain a presence in all of the park court spaces, which sustains their ‘black’ hegemonic masculine subjectivities. Crucial to this ability to play in all the park spaces is their lack of concern about personal safety because they are talented basketball players and, therefore, as Neal says, they ‘got no enemies by hoopin’’. The ‘gangstas’, because they have the physical capacity to intimidate other young men into leaving the courts, are able to play in spaces such as Spring and Linwood Parks. However, their physical ability to terrorize young men does not translate into basketball prowess, and they are unable to ‘run’ more

competitive spaces such as Rafferty Park which requires higher levels of athletic skill for access. In these more 'elite' spaces, young men such as Adam and Neal position all the 'other' males, including these gang members, as getting 'killed' or as being 'weak' because they are not considered to be as physically talented and strong as they are.

John's commentary illustrates the dominant and dominating effects of this hegemonic masculine authority upon those who embody a type of 'physical capital' that is considered 'weak' in the particular culture of basketball that pervades in the parks of southwest Springfield. In Rafferty Park, John would not be picked to play in a game because he is not 'known' within the African-American masculine hierarchy as a talented basketball player. While he was sometimes able to play in Linwood Park, he was eventually chased away by another African-American male who threatened to shoot him. As a result, John can only play basketball at Willow Park⁴⁴ which is located next to his home. He says that Willow Park 'is so convenient and like all my friends are there, everybody knows me there. So it's a friendly place to be'. In relation to the hegemonic masculine authority afforded to Neal, John, and even Ricky, John is not even positioned by them as being 'weak' or getting 'killed' during their games because he is not even a presence in the majority of the parks. Even though John takes up a 'black' masculine subject-position that is requisite for admission to the highly competitive park spaces, he has such a devalued form of physical capital that he remains essentially invisible in the culture of basketball in southwest Springfield.

The description of masculine hierarchies that operate in a location where the success of 'black' male basketball players is so idealized accentuates how those considered to be the most physically strong and talented reap the majority of the social benefits. These are the young men who can play in all the basketball

⁴⁴ It is ironic that John is only comfortable using Willow Park to play basketball because this park has a reputation for being a dangerous park – during the 1990s it was home to the notorious 'Willow Park Bloods' gang.

courts, get free sportswear, obtain summer jobs working in youth sport camps, travel around the United States on club teams, have possible scholarships to universities, and are encouraged by their peers, teachers, and administrators at the high school. In contrast, young men such as John remain relatively powerless, marginalized, and unsupported within their communities. Connell (1995) argues that the ways young men such as John exist in lower positions of power parallels the hegemonic masculine sport culture that pervades Western societies. He comments that '(m)arginalization is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group. Thus, in the US, particular 'black' athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity. But the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle down effect; it does not yield social authority to 'black' men generally' (Connell, 1995, p. 81). While it is likely that Neal, Ricky, and Adam have limited social authority, particularly outside of their local communities, they still have the ability to accumulate more 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) than John solely on the basis of their physical capabilities in basketball. The differential positions of power afforded to young African-American men here suggests the inadequacy of construing social inequality only across 'black'/white and rich/poor binaries.

While these young men seemingly inhabit a unifying African-American subjectivity that is tied to basketball, Holloway (2000) notes that '(t)he processes of identity formation and consequences of identity operate in different ways, resulting in different outcomes, in different geographic contexts' (p. 199). The previous excerpts demonstrate how the young 'black' men using 'informal' basketball spaces come to occupy various gradations of power within the category of African-American, depending on their positioning within a masculine hierarchy that privileges physical capability and strength. Because these young men are multiply positioned within discursive systems of power and come to exercise power in diverse and contradictory ways, I argue that they qualitatively experience being African-American or 'black' in quite distinctive ways. This is similar to the analysis presented in Chapter Four, where it was argued that the young women actually took up differentiated 'black' subjectivities and positions of power in

relation to dominant health discourses. Together, these arguments suggest the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the nuanced ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ positions that young people come to occupy. This more pluralized approach is largely absent from most physical activity and sport studies which often condense ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ into reductive categories. From this viewpoint, I now turn to a more specific focus on gender in order to further explore the ‘internal gradations’ that exist within the ‘black’ or African-American experience (Nayak, 2003). In the next analysis I examine how the domination and exclusion of females is crucially connected with the hegemonic masculine culture of basketball.

‘SHE CAN’T DO IT’: YOUNG WOMEN’S EXCLUSION THROUGH GENDERED HIERARCHIES

Following Green’s (1998) assertion that physical activity and leisure spaces “work” to produce and perpetuate inequalities and social hierarchies’ (p. 175) that come to sustain specific gendered subjectivities, I now turn to an analysis of the young people’s talk around female basketball players. In doing so, I draw on Schacht’s (1996) argument that sport spaces are sites where young men ‘learn how to use force to ensure a dominant position relative to women’ (p.562). Because physical prowess is considered to be crucially tied to male dominance, I argue that the young men construct their masculine subjectivities through the subordination and exclusion of the young women who are considered to be physically weaker and thus interfering with the young men’s training. As the title of this section indicates, the young women are considered by the young men to be fundamentally incapable of playing basketball at a level commensurate with the young men’s abilities and desires. In this way, I make the claim that the popular egalitarian sport slogan ‘Just Do It’ has been transformed through the exercise of dominant masculine power and its narrow definition of physical ability into ‘she can’t do it’. The comments from both the young men and women indicate how the young men come to maintain their hegemonic masculine subjectivities by ensuring that basketball spaces are not coded as feminine (Beal & Wilson, 2004). As a result, the hierarchy of masculine legitimacy is organized around the exclusion of the young women from the basketball spaces. Similar to the male

skateboarders found in Beal and Wilson (2004), the ways in which the young men in my study use the basketball spaces ‘not only reinforces a specific type of masculinity, it simultaneously dissuades full and independent engagement of females’ (p.13).

The commentary provided by John indicates that, while he may be situated marginally in relation to the male-dominated hierarchies, the women who play basketball are marginalized even further by the hegemonic masculine practices operating in the basketball spaces. While I have argued previously that a form of physical capital that is linked with ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ discourses is critical to the creation and (re)production of the masculine hierarchies, even highly-talented African-American young women are devalued because of their gender. Their subsequent exclusion is integral to the ways the young men come to exist as masculine subjects.

From John:

- Matt: What about when the girls play, what is that like?
John: We have fun.
Matt: How come?
John: Because they would be always talking about don’t foul them and [we] plays rough with the girls.
Matt: Do guys let the girls play or do the girls play, do they want to play?
John: Oh yeah, the girls want to play sometimes but they don’t let, some people don’t let the girls play.
Matt: How come?
John: Because the girls that go down to Willow [Park] aren’t as good as the dudes so they don’t want to get, the dudes don’t want to pick them up.
Matt: Like when you play ‘next’ or something like that?
John: Yeah.

Later in the interview:

- Matt: So what if a girl comes down the park, then what?

John: She wants to play; she can play but she might not get picked up if she is good or not.
 Matt Does that happen sometimes?
 John: Yeah.

This excerpt from John demonstrates how the young men employ tactics such as playing rough and not picking the young women to play by using ‘next’ to keep them off the courts, thereby reinforcing the young men’s ‘perceived superior masculine status through a physical and social process’ (Schacht, 1996, p.560). This begins to build the case that the young women in my study ‘provide both the basis and the parameters’ (p.561) by which the young men construct their masculine subjectivities. The types of hegemonic masculine subjectivities that the young men come to know and idealize would not exist without their devalued understanding of ‘the feminine’ (p.561).

The young women in the neighborhood are subordinated even if they are very talented. This points to the ways that being female is directly linked with a devalued form of physical capital. While I earlier argued that the ‘Mexican’ men were portrayed as being inherently ‘too short’ and therefore incompetent at basketball, being female similarly signifies physical inferiority and lesser athletic ability. As a result, the young women are considered to be getting in the way of the young men’s training regime because they are deemed incapable of providing the necessary competition. This is evident in the next quote from Sharon:

From Sharon:

Matt: Why would you go to Rafferty Park?
 Sharon: I don’t know, it doesn’t have so many people, not so many crazy⁴⁵ people like at Spring Park.
 Matt: What do you mean?
 Sharon: ‘Black’ people hang out there, and they shoot and fight all the time, and its people my age, and they’re fighting out there, and during the day the boys have the court.

⁴⁵ Many of the young women in the study cohort had reservations about going to Spring Park. One young Haitian woman called it ‘ghetto’ and ‘people would be just fighting over stupid stuff’.

- Matt: Do they hog the court?
- Sharon: Yeah, and they fight a lot, so they'll be playing a basketball game and someone will get mad and they'll start a fight, but at Rafferty Park, a lot of older people will go there and so its not like they're as horny as the other boys.
- Matt: And do you play with the boys or the girls?
- Sharon: The girls play there, but when you have the boys play there, they'll rarely pick you, or if they pick you, they won't really play with you, like they won't pass the ball, and be like 'she can't do it'.

Even though Sharon is a very capable runner and basketball player she is unable to play at both Spring Park and Rafferty Park. Spring Park is considered to be unsafe and 'during the day the boys have the court'. When she goes to Rafferty Park she is unable to get into a game because the young men won't pick her. If she does manage to get on the court they won't pass the ball to her. In another interview Sharon recalls the process by which the young men take over the courts at Rafferty Park in more detail:

- Matt: Yeah tell me more about that, like when you used to play there, because there are a lot of courts there at Rafferty, right?
- Sharon: Yes.
- Matt: So if you are playing on which court or...?
- Sharon: There was like two big courts that people mainly play on because you know, the courts are like, here are the baskets on one side, on the left, and the baskets are on the right side. But the one that's under the canopy thing, like if it was really, really hot outside the people would play on the 'black' top one, the one that doesn't have a canopy on the top at the end; like you would see people all the time sitting on the sides and stuff, you know, not getting picked and it was mostly girls because you know, the girls would want to play basketball too. Or if we were up there playing basketball the guys would just come and start playing on the hoops that we were playing on. So that would just force us off that one and go to another one and then when they would have games you would ask them could you play and they would be like 'yeah' or if they'd say 'no' you would just have to sit down but if they say 'yes', you can play but nobody is really going to take you seriously because they... well that's what I used to think when I was there.

Sharon's comments parallel those made by the young women in Wilson, White, and Fisher's (2001) study of an inner-city recreation center in Toronto. In their 'drop in center' basketball spaces the young women in Wilson et al.'s study were only conditionally accepted into the male-dominated games. The young women would step onto the court to toss a ball around when the young men happened to be at the other end of the court during a full-court game. When the game moved back the young women would return to the bleachers and watch. In relation to the 'male-dominated informal culture of the gym' most of these young women were spectators of all-male basketball games and the young women who did play were severely limited in their ability to play on the gym court (Wilson et al., 2001, p.315).

The commentary above provides evidence that the exclusion and dominance of the young women is fundamentally linked with the processes that create and maintain hegemonic 'black' masculine subjectivities. In his study of male rugby players, Schacht (1996) argues that gender hierarchies were established through the remarks that men made about the women who would watch rugby matches or walk by the playing field. Through their demeaning comments, a gender hierarchy was constructed and maintained, with the most physically capable or strong men at the center or at the top of this hierarchy. These masculine hierarchies served to 'establish boundaries of what masculinity was not – women and the feminine...' (p.559). In a way similar to this rugby example, the park basketball spaces also operate as sites of female subordination through male-dominated hierarchies. This process serves to reinforce the young men's hegemonic masculine subjectivities. While I have argued previously that factors such as 'race' and 'ethnicity' are crucially linked to the masculine hierarchies, 'and often result in very different, sometimes competing conceptions of masculinity' (p.562), Schacht argues that hegemonic masculinity is still framed primarily 'in terms of what it is not: women and the feminine' (p.562). The park basketball spaces therefore act as sites of a "'special' male bond of superiority' (p.561).

DISCUSSION

'EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SPORT': BASKETBALL AS THE 'ANTI-DRUG' FOR 'BLACK' YOUNG MEN

Basketball is the quintessential inner-city sport. It is an article of faith that the sport is a ticket out of the despair, poverty, and violence that pervade inner-city slums. (White & Cones, 1999, p.87)

While the male-dominated hierarchies in the basketball spaces that have been extensively described above are (re)produced by the young men themselves, these configurations of power have also been constructed in relation to prevailing cultural discourses emphasizing the individual empowerment of the urban poor (usually 'black' males) through sport. Yet, I argue here that these 'empowerment through sport' discourses that have great currency within poor inner-city areas and Western societies more widely serve to discipline and normalize African-American young men in often detrimental ways. The ways these young men come to invest themselves in neo-liberal practices of self-improvement and individual choice is brought to bear in the next exchange with Neal:

Matt: Why do you play basketball?

Neal: 'cause it's fun! It's just, the competition, to see who's better or not. And see what you can do and what you can't do. And like, like basketball's my anti-drug, so, instead of being out in the street, and you know bein' in a gang, I just play basketball, and like, people that mess with me, like gang members and stuff like that, they don't mess with me 'cause they, they know I hoop. And so, it just help me, I don't know, I love it, it's like my life.

After Neal says 'it's fun!' he immediately describes how it is the competition ('to see who's better or not') that brings enjoyment for him and the other young men such as Adam. When Neal says that basketball allows him to see what he 'can do' and 'can't do', it becomes clear that he is drawing on the neo-liberal understandings of the self that focus on individual improvement. A crucial element to the ways he *chooses* to improve himself through basketball involves distinguishing himself from the gang members, who 'don't mess' with him and

support him. In this way Neal takes up a moralistic and normative imperative that is constructed for him by the widely-established 'gangs versus sport' dichotomy (Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998). It is argued that within this dichotomy the gang member 'whose deviance is expressed through the breach of the work ethic, failed discipline, pathological greed, compulsion, and violence, produces what/who are normal and acceptable: the urban African American athlete' (p.370). This discourse has a high degree of salience for many of the young men in my study who have seen family members or friends get 'caught up' in criminal activities or in gangs. In the above quote Neal says that basketball is his 'anti-drug' and he has mentioned elsewhere that his cousins are involved in gangs. Ricky's older brother was a talented basketball player who he says 'just chose the wrong path' and spent time in prison. John says that 'lot's for me is at stake' and that he wants to make it as a professional athlete because his older brother was a former football player who went to prison. In relation to their close proximity to gangs and crime, these young men have become imbued with an unwavering desire to be successful athletes.

Because the 'gangs vs. sport' dyad (Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998) has so much currency in their neighborhoods and communities, the young men who participate and excel in basketball are considered to be 'properly disciplined and productive' (Cole, 1996, p.367) in the image of the dominant White societies and in contrast to their peers who are considered to be deviant, criminal, and 'black'. This high moral valuation of the young men who excel in basketball is (re)produced through the presence of a plethora of grassroots self-improvement youth programs in the southwest neighborhoods. For instance, 'Midnight Basketball', which deliberately targets young 'black' males in order to keep them 'off the streets' on weekend nights, maintains a strong presence at the Salvation Army Center on Lakewood Street. Local African-American professional basketball players have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in high school sport teams and 'after school' sport programs. Neal has also commented that at Thompson High School 'they show the basketball team so much love' because basketball players are seen as examples of individual academic and athletic achievement. Popular media

culture and trans-national corporations such as Nike and the National Basketball Association also play a pivotal role in (re)producing notions of self-improvement and individual choice. Wilson (1997) notes that professional basketball teams and media outlets heavily promote ‘rags to riches’ narratives of professional African-American basketball players in order to sustain the belief that individual choice and determination is crucial ‘to overcoming difficulties and achieving success’ (p.181). In southwest Springfield, the local professional basketball team has invested millions of dollars into one of the primary community youth centers which aims to recuperate the urban youth population through music, arts, and sport programming. Members of this professional basketball team make frequent visits to this center and give speeches about the virtues of avoiding gangs and using sport to succeed in life.

Nike, Inc. also plays a vital role in (re)producing notions of ‘empowerment through sport’ amongst the young ‘black’ men living in southwest Springfield. Nike has refurbished the basketball courts in Linwood, Willow, Rafferty, and Spring Parks⁴⁶ (Figure 5.3) and provides the Thompson High School team with an annual sponsorship package that is valued at several thousand dollars. Through these material engagements, as well as through their negotiations of physical culture, the young men in my study take up the Nike ‘swoosh’, which is ‘implicated in the liberal humanist themes of “self made” and “made in America”’ (p.390). Since Nike is considered to be ‘technologically hip, innovative, and worldly (the American global citizen)’ (Cole, 1996, p.372), the symbols found on the park courts of southwest Springfield become even more alluring in the lives of the young men and powerfully imbue them with a sense of empowerment through sport.

⁴⁶ Cole (1996) describes how ‘(N)ike’s Environmental Action Team (N.E.A.T.) developed a program to collect and recycle old Nike shoes as indoor and outdoor sport courts, playgrounds, and tracks: larger segments of youth are provided with space to participate in sports and physical activity through environmentally sound practices which used shoes, that would otherwise contribute to landfill crisis, are recycled’ (p.380). She considers this program as emblematic of the ways Nike positions itself as a conscientious and compassionate corporation, further contributing to a discourse of individual choice-making and responsible citizenship.

Thus, through a variety of cultural institutions, basketball is presented to the young men such as Ricky, Neal, John, and Adam as a means of being ‘straight’ and a way to achieve ‘America’s utopic promises’ (Cole, 1996, p.367). As such, these institutions play a crucial role in (re)producing sets of truths that signify the possible subjectivities of African-American young men. It is this imperative to be ‘straight’ that speaks so powerfully to the young men in my study who have witnessed first-hand the effects of ‘gang-banging’ and crime. The persuasiveness of these truths serves to envince within young men such as Neal, Ricky, John, and Adam the desire to enact certain self-body practices to become moral and productive citizens. In so doing, these discourses work to discipline and normalize the young men by delimiting their subjectivities to either the ‘deviant’ gangster or the ‘straight’ athlete.

‘MY LIFE IS POINTLESS WITHOUT BASKETBALL’: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ‘BLACK’ MASCULINE SUBJECTIVITIES

In this analysis I further explore the implications of a ‘black’ masculine subjectivity that I have argued is constituted within the male-dominated basketball hierarchies in ‘informal’ basketball spaces. I have also suggested that the construction of these masculine hierarchies and subjectivities is directly tied to the operation of powerful institutional and popular culture discourses. As mentioned previously, these ‘empowerment through sport’ discourses are directly linked to ‘racial’ discourses because they specifically target young ‘black’ or African-American men such as Adam, Neal, Ricky, and John. By engaging with these neo-liberal discourses and assuming a particular ‘straight’ and ‘black’ masculine subjectivity, these young men come to know themselves as ‘normal’. Yet, despite these claims to ‘normalcy’, a strong component of this subject-position is an affirmation of ‘blackness’ and distancing from whiteness. Wilson (1999) comments that ‘(s)port, particularly basketball, are sites where young Black males symbolically oppose the dominant White group’ (p.232). This ‘black’ masculine subject-position is often constituted in relation to a male-centered ‘hip hop’ or ‘street culture’ (Foster, 1998, p. 16) that is distinctly ‘not white’. Neal, for instance, says that he comes from a ‘hip hop background’ which works in direct tandem with basketball (‘Basketball is one and two’) to constitute his African-

American subject-position. In the next excerpt he comments that 'black' African-Americans 'as people' want to use sports such as basketball and football to improve their lives.

From Neal:

- Matt: What about, you said basketball 'we' like 'black' African-Americans, is that right?
- Neal: Just as people, yeah 'black' African-Americans, yeah.
- Matt: How does that tie to basketball do you think?
- Neal: It ties the sports I guess, like that's a game, living here is like not that good or whatever and like then I'll think...
- Matt: What do you mean by that?
- Neal: We want better for ourselves and like by using basketball as a tool, football and sport as a tool you try to get out of here, you know like try to get to college, you know try to make something of our lives.

In comparison to the 'black' young women in my study, these young men were much more invested in a desire to 'make something' of their lives, their families, and their communities. They were very explicit about how they understood themselves as being community heroes or role models. This desire to be community 'heroes' is also found in Woodward's (2004) study of inner city 'black' male boxers. She argues that in poor urban locations, sport spaces such as boxing clubs (re)produce masculinities that involve heroic narratives: '(t)he need to identify with a hero permeates the accounts of men interviewed at the gym, and boxing offers black heroes' (p.13). Furthermore, the ways in which this 'heroic' narrative is linked with one's ability to 'look after himself against the odds' suggests that within impoverished inner-city locations neo-liberal sport practices associated with self-sufficiency and self-improvement shape the desires of young 'black' men. In their pursuit of a basketball heroic narrative (the 'hoop dream'), the young 'black' men in my study take up disciplinary self-body relations linked with the achievement of a valorized 'black' masculine subjectivity.

I would also argue that the historical and social ‘de-masculinization’ of African-American men plays a fundamental role in creating this desire to be a moral and ‘heroic’ male athlete. It has been argued by Edwards (1983) that ‘black’ men in American society have been ‘cut off’ from ‘mainstream routes of masculinity’ such as economic achievement (p.32). As such, success in sport is seen as a means for men to prove their manhood and ‘as a tool’ to attain cultural and economic capital in Western society more widely. hooks (2004) suggests that because of the high-profile successes of ‘black’ male athletes, young ‘black’ men try to ‘prove their value’ and their manhood by participating in sports such as basketball. As a result, basketball spaces are considered by these young men to be sites of ‘redemption and affirmation’ and spaces from which to ‘gain both visibility and a measure of respect’ (p. 94). It is very evident at this point in the analysis that the young men in my study choose to invest themselves in certain disciplinary practices that are linked with their desire to become a highly-respected and heroic ‘black’ masculine self.

This desire is so powerfully constructed that a person such as Adam, who has a ‘black’ father and a Chinese mother, consciously chooses to take up a ‘black’ masculine subjectivity that is tied to his immersion in basketball whilst negating his ‘Chineseness’ (Ang, 1998). Consider the following comments from my last interview with Adam:

I’m ‘black’, yeah and Asian but I guess I’m just ‘black’... I was brought up on that side playing basketball with all my cousins and where I go to school. So I was brought up with all my cousins playing basketball and just hanging out.

I made note that Adam seemed very uncomfortable and reticent to talk about his ‘racial’ background, particularly when I probed around his mother’s Chinese background. My contention is that the cultural and economic rewards that are given to these young black men by their communities and schools play a determining role in Adam’s investment in a ‘black’ subjectivity. This is significant because, in contrast, Irene and Maureen, who could easily assume an

African-American subjectivity, are very adamant that they choose to disassociate themselves from a 'black' African-American female subjectivity and instead emphasize their Haitian upbringing. For them, investing in this subjectivity brings them no personal or financial 'pay offs', whereas it is much more valuable for Adam to stake a claim around African-American 'blackness'. This points to the distinct set of discursive resources through which the young men and women in my study come to construct their gendered and racialized subjectivities. It is obvious that the neo-liberal practices of sport have are much more explicitly organized towards disciplining and normalizing the young 'black' males, and come to have much less currency amongst the young 'black' females.

For these young men it is nearly impossible for them to conceive of an 'alternative' 'black' masculine self that would provide them with more mindful self-body relations and ways of interacting with their peers. The authority of the 'empowerment through sport' discourses is so powerful that all of the young men in my study come to engage with a very narrow and instrumentalist set of self-body practices. Furthermore, hooks (2004) argues that despite the powerful narrative of 'black' male empowerment through sport, taking up this discourse rarely provides opportunities from which 'an alternative masculinity rooted in dignity and selfhood can emerge' (p. 22). Because their subjectivities are so heavily invested in basketball achievement, the young men are compelled to 'hog the courts' in the parks and gyms and 'play rough' with or exclude the other young men and women who are perceived to be interfering with their self-forming practices. The young men have problematically constructed and sustained gender-exclusive hierarchies that impinge on how the young women can use spaces and construct their own sense of self. As Green (1998) argues, 'the historical limitation of women's mobility in terms of space, has in some cultural contexts been a means to control and subordination and also a limitation on identity' (p.177). The exclusionary practices of the young men delimits the self-forming practices of young women such as Sharon, and, in so doing, stops them from investing in their own distinctive desires and dreams.

While these young men easily take up an essentialist ‘racial’ subject-position that is rooted in sport success and the oppression of other young men and women, the issue of self-identity for these young men is a complex one. Despite their relatively privileged status amongst my cohort, these young men are still socially and economically marginalized as the racialized urban ‘other’. Neal’s comments poignantly demonstrate that these young men *know* that they exist as urban impoverished males. It would therefore be difficult to imagine these young men not strongly affirming a ‘black’ masculine athletic self that might provide them with a chance of ‘making it’. Their attachment to a ‘black’ masculine basketball subjectivity is made evident in the following exchange with Adam and Neal.

From Adam and Neal:

- Matt: Could you both, starting with you Neal, could you see yourself stopping playing?
- Neal: Nope.
- Matt: Ever?
- Neal: (Shakes his head) ‘Cause it’s like something that, to me, basketball is like breathing.
- Matt: It’s like what?
- Neal: Breathing. Like if I can’t play basketball then, you know, it’s like I’m like without air ‘cause I love it so much. You know, I’m trying to do whatever it takes for me to play, so, if I couldn’t play basketball I don’t know what I’d do.
- Matt: How about for you Adam? Could you see yourself stopping from playing?
- Adam: Nawww, I work too hard to stop playing. I work so hard, way too hard to stop playing. And like, to me, I’m like one of the best players in the state, so I work way too hard to, uh, give up playing. So, I couldn’t see myself...

Later in the interview:

- Neal: We work, I mean we do this every day 365 days a year, so, for us to stop playing that’s like ‘Why have we been doing this?’ you know, that’s like our whole, to me that’s like...
- Adam: Our whole life...

Neal: That's like my life is pointless without basketball, it's not really like that, but it's basically like that 'cause I love it so much it and I wanna do it.

Despite their hegemonic positions of power within the parks and their local community, I argue that this 'black' masculine sports identity 'should not be mistaken for real power' in American society (Wilson, 1999, p.232-233). It is a 'marginalized masculinity' (p.233) that 'does not have the effects envisaged by the discursive agent' (Youdell, 2004a, p.205) in relation to the dominant sets of meanings and subjectivities that operate in the discursive field. While they are able to 'run' the courts of southwest Springfield, the power that is afforded to these young men is still limited, even though their practices of the self are closely aligned with the dominant ideals articulated through the neo-liberal discursive field. Yet, their inability to access power and rupture their positioning as the racialized 'Other' only becomes evident at the point when most of these young men fail to 'make something' of their lives through basketball. As Edwards (1983) notes, 'the overwhelming majority of young males seeking affluence and stardom through sports are foredoomed to fail' (p. 32).

While it is possible that Neal and Adam know they have a chance of 'making it' through basketball (they are amongst the top 100 high school prospects in the United States) and pursue their dreams accordingly, John's commentary is significant because it is highly likely that he realizes at this point that he is not going to become a professional or collegiate basketball player. He is rarely able to play in the park or 'drop in' games, he is not a member of the elite high school or club teams, he is not physically tall or fast, and he does not have the necessary basketball skill set. However, despite his marginalized status within the male-dominated basketball hierarchy, he still uses Willow Park in ways similar to the more dominant men such as Neal, Adam, and Ricky. While they physically intimidate John and do not pick him to play through the system of picking teams called 'next', he adopts these exclusionary practices in Willow Park when the young women appear. In this way John still invests himself in an extensive range of self-forming practices aimed at attaining a 'black' masculine subject-position

that has currency amongst his peers and in his community. For instance, in Chapter Four I provided evidence that John adheres to a strict eating and exercise program because he sees it as a means to make it to 'the league' (the professional National Football League). Yet, he has only cracked the reserve team lineup, while other young men his age are already starting on the first team and signing scholarship letters to play in universities. In my interviews with John I always felt that the way he articulated his desire to play in 'the league' sounded hollow. It was as if he knew he was not going to play professional football, but needed to justify the set of eating and exercise practices that he had set up for himself by staking a claim around a 'sport dream'. I suggest that the 'sport dream' gives John a sense of empowerment as a young 'black' male living with his single mother and younger brother, while his older brother whom he idealized had gone down the path of 'gangsterism' (White & Cones III, 1999, p.72). By remaining 'straight' through basketball and football, John is able to garner a feeling of dignity and self-respect in a society where only 'black' male athletes are afforded praise and support.

The line of inquiry in this final section raises crucial questions: What happens when the majority of these young men fail to make it to top university and professional basketball programs or become injured? What will be the psychic effects resulting from the loss of this 'black' masculine sense of self that is equated with sport success? In some ways, young men such as John are more prepared for the moment when their dreams and, therefore, their sense of self fade away. They know that their 'sport dream' is different and provides them with the means to achieve other desires, such as feeling a sense of masculinity in the role of a family 'hero'. In comparison, Neal and Adam are much more likely to struggle when they are unable to reconcile their desire for community recognition and stardom with their denuded 'black' masculine subjectivities.

CONCLUSIONS

I have argued that the neo-liberal 'empowerment through sport discourses' which led to the creation and maintenance of the hegemonic masculine culture of

basketball favored those young 'black' men with the most talent and physical strength. As a result, the circulation of these discourses in the basketball spaces served to provide some men with more power than others. At the same time, these configurations of power shaped the desires from which the young men could take up particular self-forming practices, often in relation to their idealization of a unifying 'black' masculine sport subjectivity. Yet, even though these young men desire to attain a 'black' masculine subject-position that is crucially linked with basketball, and have a narrow set of practices by which to invest in this ideal, I would argue that the process of engaging with this 'ideal' is complicated and contradictory. The process of self-formation becomes very difficult because these young men have to negotiate so many 'black' discursive subjectivities made available to them. For instance, they often have to negotiate 'polarized depictions of black masculinity' in basketball that involves being either 'good blacks' or blacks with 'attitude' (Wilson, 1999, p.237). Within this 'racial' dichotomy, they have to invest in a 'black' subject-position that repudiates whiteness and asserts 'blackness' by deploying 'attitude' (e.g. Allen Iverson) but avoids becoming 'too black' (e.g. acting like a 'thug', 'gangsta', or even 'jumped up nigger' (Andrews, 1996a, p.140). Also, they must decide how to engage with the dominant white neo-liberal discourses that entails following the 'hoop dream' and 'making it', without becoming 'too white' (e.g. not 'keeping it real', acting like a 'sell out', and even being 'like Mike'⁴⁷)? Investing in a 'black' masculine subjectivity becomes even more difficult when these young men see 'black' athletic icons such as Michael Jordan who have 'been able to pander to the 'racial' insecurities and paranoia of the white majority, primarily because of their ability to shed their black identities in promotional contexts' (Andrews, 1996a, p.139). This points to the difficulty that even 'idealized' 'black' male athletes have in maintaining a coherent sense of self in relation to the dominant rationalities of the neo-liberal sport culture that has historically constituted them as the racialized 'Other'. Andrews (1996b) notes that African-Americans such as Michael Jordan are often compelled to 'disavow their blackness' because American culture does not

⁴⁷ 'Mike' is Michael Jordan, who has been criticized for portraying himself as racially-neutral and apolitical in order to market himself to a more mainstream audience.

tolerate those who are considered to be 'too black' (p.139). He argues that '(m)any in the white population are gracious enough to accept, even adulate, African Americans, but only if they do not explicitly assert their blackness' (p.140). For the young men in my study the quandary of constituting their subjectivities is to simultaneously take up a unifying 'black' masculine subjectivity that is rooted in basketball *and* also maintain a subject-position that is not 'too black' (e.g. being the 'threatening racial Other' in the gangs and failing to take up the cultural and institutional sport dream discourses offered to them by White society) (Andrews, 1996a, p.140). The consequences of maintaining this requisite balance of identity could be immense for these young men. From their perspective failure might be seen as precluding them from leaving a life that is, as Neal says, 'not that good'.

The analysis above illustrates how the young 'black' men in my study, while seemingly able to inhabit a unifying 'black' masculine subjectivity that is tied to a 'black aesthetic' of basketball (Cones & White III, 1999), actually have to make sense of their lives in relation to contradictory social messages, practices, and experiences and have to confront the hypocrisies of neo-liberalism which are juxtaposed with their daily experiences of poverty. In their study of working-class urban youth, Dillabough, Wang, and Kennelly (2005) argue that '(t)hey daily confront circumstances which are beyond their control, largely the products of the neo-liberal structuring of urban cities and schools marked and targeted as "demonized"' (p.103). From this relatively powerless position I would argue that these young men actually have very little capacity to freely stylize their own existence, and, like John, have little choice but to follow the path of the 'hoop dream'. While there seemed to be an element of choice in the ways the young men came to work on themselves in relation to this ideal, the ways that the young men came to exist as 'racial' subjects was made possible and restricted by the powerful impacts of neo-liberal and multi-national institutions and cultural forces which inhabit the post-industrial landscape. In particular, the narrow set of practices taken up by these young men demonstrates the persuasiveness of these institutions in compelling the young men to take up normalized and de-radicalized

subjectivities. The ways in which they have been subtly and consistently shaped by the sets of truths associated with neo-liberalism delimits their ability to reflect upon and critique the ways they come to desire a chimerical 'hoop dream', and, along the way, come to invest in certain self-forming practices associated with living as poor 'black' young men amongst their families, communities, and peers. I would argue that the point of rupture only occurs when the 'hoop dreams' are inevitably interrupted. It is only at this point when alternative forms of 'black' masculinity can emerge, along with a more self-aware set of self-body relations.

In the next section I explore the ways young women might be able to more critically engage with hierarchical 'racial', gendered, and classed discourses which center around the body's ability to perform in dance. I analyze how the young women take up discourses around dance and the body in order to constitute themselves as 'black' and 'hybrid' subjects. In so doing, I further investigate the ways subjects constituted through discourse might desire to 'be' someone else (both knowingly and unknowingly) while also troubling, undermining, and shifting hegemonic discourses that exist in their physical activity spaces (Youdell, 2004a, p.206).

Note

Images in Chapters 3 and 5 have been removed due to large file sizes

CHAPTER SIX: 'FREAKY IS JUST HOW I GET DOWN': YOUNG WOMEN'S DISCURSIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH DANCE SPACES

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Five I argued that basketball spaces in southwest Springfield are positioned as sites of individual empowerment for the young 'black' men in my study. The masculine culture of basketball has been heavily invested in and privileged by community groups and multi-national corporations such as Nike. As a result, the young 'black' men deliberately pursued basketball in order to form and maintain hegemonic 'black' masculine subjectivities. The focus of this chapter is to further engage with the place and meaning of physical activity in the lives of young people by exploring the ways that the young women come to exist as particular subjects by negotiating the discursive resources found in their physical activity spaces. In particular, this analysis centers around the young women's use of both institutional and 'informal' dance spaces, and how these spaces impart particular ways of being through the operation of specific 'racial', classed, and gendered social practices and hierarchies.

My argument throughout this thesis has been that the young people construct a sense of self by negotiating disciplinary power that covertly surrounds their bodies and shapes their desires in their physical activity and sport spaces. For instance, the analysis that is developing indicates that neo-liberal discourses associated with basketball provide the young men with the resources from which to construct and regulate their bodies in order to attain a hegemonic 'black' masculine subjectivity. I have pointed out that the young men often took up a very narrow set of self-body relations and seemed to have a limited capacity to enunciate and live an existence outside this essentialist subject-position. Yet, I have suggested throughout this thesis that the complex conditions of a postmodern world can also provide the young people with the resources to constitute subjectivities that are malleable, that can be worked on in order to cross and blur boundaries previously defined by the

dominant Western societies (Madan, 2000). While these subjectivities are still formed and constrained through discourse, they are not determined and come to 'signify many degrees of belonging' (Madan, 2000, p.27) and point to capacity of individuals to subvert dominant power relations.

From this understanding of the spatially-constituted subject I now turn to analyze how the dance spaces work to provide the young women with heterogeneous subjectivities and locations of power. This analysis primarily focuses upon the experiences of the young 'black' women to redress the profound lack of studies that engage with the place and meaning of physical activity and sport in their lives. For instance, sport sociologist Susan Birrell (1989) has argued that too often "(b)lack athlete" usually means "Black male athlete", an equation that obliterates gender' (p.213). By turning to an analysis of the young women's use of dance spaces I provide an account of the ways the young 'black' women in my study fluidly take up multiple 'racial' and 'ethnic' discursive subjectivities.

Dance is a useful medium to understand how gendered discursive processes work to provide the young women with diverse and contradictory notions of femininity, 'race', and culture because it has been argued that '(t)he feminine connotations of dance stand in binary opposition to the masculine connotations of physical sports such as rugby and football' (Thomas, 1996, p.507). In the context of this thesis, this suggests that dance spaces work in quite different ways from the basketball spaces in providing the young women with discursive and material resources from which to construct their subjectivities. Many of the young women in my cohort extensively participated in dance, in both institutional settings and in 'informal' spaces. Their conversations about their experiences of dance provided opportunities to analyze the social practices operating within the young women's dance spaces. The mode of analysis that was developed explored the proliferation of feminine subjectivities and, in so doing, the young women's capacity to resignify contemporary understandings of subjectivity, embodiment and social identities (Nash, 2000). Several key questions that were previously outlined at the end of Chapter Three were used to frame this analysis:

- How do the social practices of institutionalized and ‘informal’ dance spaces work to include or exclude the young women?
- Is access to these spaces related to notions of embodiment, physical capability and choice of dance?
- How might these dance spaces also serve to (re)produce dominant Western discourses related to gender, ‘ethnicity’, class, and sexuality?
- What meanings, subjectivities, and bodies are produced through the use of these spaces?

The above questions will be used to investigate the complex and specific ways that the young ‘black’ women engage with the dominant set of discourses operating in their dance spaces and how these provide the young women with possibilities of taking up non-normative relations to their bodies and selves. This focus affords a specific way of looking into how the discursively-produced body comes to constitute the young women’s gendered and racialized subjectivities.

To analyze how bodies are implicated in the processes of subject formation, I return to a body of cultural geography literature that was outlined in Chapter Five. One strength of this theoretical approach lies in stressing that the *body* acts as a locus of power/knowledge relations and must become the focus of any spatial inquiry. As van Ingen (2003) comments, ‘(p)lacing the body at the centre of spatial inquiry highlights the ways in which the body itself is a site of struggle over unequal power relations, such as gender, sexuality and race’ (p.210). From this stance, ‘geography speaks through bodies’ (McKittrick, 2000, p.225) in a process that is fundamental to the ways individuals construct their gendered and ‘racial’ subjectivities. Yet, while cultural geography often draws from Foucault’s description of disciplinary power, whereby discursive power relations operate upon individuals to delimit and form their subjectivities, I have maintained

throughout this thesis that Foucault's later works usefully illustrate that individuals can actively participate in the processes of their self-formation. I turn to this body of work to consider the possibilities of dance spaces as complex discursive sites. I suggest that these spaces, via normalizing technologies, influence the construction of docile female bodies. However, they can also provide the discursive resources by which the young women come to make choices around their bodies in order to resist the subjectivities that are ascribed to them and gain a sense of self that is more empowering and satisfying.

Following this line of reasoning, my analysis centers around the ways resistance to normative practices and identity categories operates at the level of the body. Yet, because power produces numerous points of resistance, dance spaces provide the young women with very diverse ways of being embodied, from which they come to invest in and take up very distinctive subject positions from each other. I have argued throughout this thesis that power is differentially disbursed amongst women – often in relation to the ways they access economic, physical, and cultural capital – and provides them with unique capacities for negotiating and contesting dominant discourses. As a result, a female-centered analysis must take into account the historical and social construction of the 'black' young women as the racialized 'Other' whilst also stressing that these young women exist as 'epistemically fractured' and can take up nuanced and even oppositional subject positions to each other (Spivak, 1993). From this perspective, I explore how the 'black' women stake differential claims around their cultural subjectivities in ways that disrupt unifying categories of gender and race and points to the 'complexities, contradictions, and ambiguities of lived experience' (Madan, 2000, p.28).

My analysis of gendered dance spaces might have entailed examining how the young men and women come to take up different subject positions from each other in their dance spaces. While this line of analysis could have usefully informed my primary research interests, only young women in my study were dancers. It was difficult to recruit young male dancers because most of the

participants in the dance classes and programs were female. One of the male African-American lead dancers of the 'In Motion Dance Group' was initially interested in joining the study but his family determined that he was too busy with his various dance commitments. Because much of my analysis centers around the ways forms of physical capital afford some of the young women with more access to dance spaces and lead roles, his participation in the study would have been extremely informative. It is likely that his ability to garner the lead roles which kept him so busy was linked with his very athletic and strong 'black' body, which I argue has historically been afforded more cultural capital (particularly in the context of athletic or physical activity performance) than those of the 'black' females. Having male dancers in the study could have also provided an angle of analysis associated with gender and sexuality because '(d)ance is viewed as a predominantly feminine activity and the men who engage in it are always in "danger" of being classed as effeminate alongside the denigrated female Other' (Thomas, 1996, p.507). As a result, Thomas argues in her study of Afro-Canadian dancers that the young 'black' males associated themselves with forms of heterosexual hyper-sexuality in order to distinguish themselves from their female counterparts. This perspective might have provided crucial points of analysis that could shatter the myth of solidarity amongst 'blacks' and maybe point to the existence of gendered hierarchies that could exist in the dance spaces. I will describe later how the culture of Thompson High School (re)produced heteronormative discourses that served to dissuade many young 'black' men from participating in dance. Because the overwhelming majority of Thompson students in the dance programs were female, there was a paucity of young male dancers whom I could recruit into my cohort. Consequently, the analyses provided in this chapter primarily reflect the experiences of the young 'black' women.

THE 'PERFORMATIVE' GENDERED AND RACIALIZED BODY IN SPACE

This thesis takes up the stance that bodies and subjectivities are discursively constituted. Yet, while this concept of the embodied subject whose desires and experiences are socially embedded has been widely established in sociological

literature, it has been argued by Thomas (2003) that the field of dance studies has been slow to draw from this understanding:

Few social or cultural theorists of the body have been drawn to address dance systematically as a discursive or situated aesthetic practice, to generate insights into, for example, the politics of sexual and/or racial and/or class differences as they are traced through representations of the body and inscribed in bodily practices. (p.1)

The lack of understanding surrounding the discursively constituted body is surprising given the profound and contradictory ways that the female body has become signified and inscribed by the culture of Western dance. This necessitates an investigation into the complex intersections and operations of gender discourses, as well as 'racial' and class discourses, in the construction of the female 'Other.' This point is emphasized by dance researcher Jane Desmond (1991), who observes that '(r)ace, gender, and cultural otherness double another, with each register reinforcing the next to produce a hyperbole of "Otherness." Dancing, as a nonverbal display of the body – most often the female body – provides an especially rich mode of the articulation of this process' (p.42). This last sentence is most compelling – how exactly does the dancing body come to articulate the processes of discursive inscription and even re-inscription? This question becomes crucial from the stance that bodies are not simply 'inert objects' or 'passive and compliant' (Grosz, 1994, p.144) but are lived and experienced in ways that resist their gendered and racialized encoding. From this perspective, the discursively-constituted bodies of the young women that are inscribed within dance spaces are 'capable of being rewritten, reconstituted, in quite other terms than those which mark it' (p.60). This invites the use of an analytical framework that is able to capture the ways the young women redeploy and destabilize normative discourses associated with the female body through language and non-verbal movements.

Tackling this issue necessitates an understanding of ‘race’ and gender as socially constructed signifiers which are (re)produced through the discursive (re)embodiment of performative acts. This viewpoint is suggested by the philosophical work of queer feminist theorist Judith Butler (1990, 1997, 1998, 1999), who contends that individuals actively *do* and *undo* gender through their performative speech acts. As outlined in Chapter Two, in her theory of ‘performativity’ Butler claims that constellations of reiterative speech practices operating in specific regulatory systems serve to (re)produce the category of gender and interpellate particular discursive identities. Gender is thus given meaning only through the repetition of performative acts occurring in specific social and historical conditions and is not derivative of a ‘natural’ sexed body. Following this pattern of reasoning, the categories of sex, gender, and ‘race’ are unstable constructs with no *a priori* anatomical link and thus cannot provide ‘the truth of one’s body’ (Rasmussen, 2003, p.94). This points to the instability of these seemingly natural identity categories and suggests the existence of a fluidity of identities that are open to resignification and recontextualization (Butler, 1990).

Butler (1997) does not say that these categories of difference can be eliminated, but that it is necessary to deconstruct how and in what specific temporal conditions they are deployed and serve to produce specific normalizing discourses. It is then possible to find the ‘gaps’ and ‘fissures’ within these categories from which insurrectionary speech and bodily acts – which critique, parody, and exaggerate existing norms – may ‘assume authorization’ (Butler, 1997; Rasmussen, 2003). These resistant performative acts serve to produce strategic subjectivities that ‘demand new possibilities of reading’ (Rasmussen, 2003, p.85) and re-alter the contexts where they will be received in the future. Therefore, the concept of ‘performativity’ is useful to recognize the practices from which the young women destabilize natural identity categories that operate in their dance spaces. For instance, in her work around the resignification of the ‘fat’ body, Kathleen LeBesco (2004) writes that ‘(B)utler’s work suggests to me that we just might be able to talk our way out of anything, even seemingly ensconced fat oppression, because speaking builds subjects’ (p.4). By expanding Butler’s

concept of gender and sexuality to be more inclusive of 'race', it is possible to illustrate the artificiality and instability of the 'truths' surrounding the body, and how they come to signify seemingly fixed and oppositional 'racial' and gender differences. The repetition of denaturalized and dissonant performative acts, which exaggerate or parody the 'naturalized' gender and 'racial' significations of the body, could serve as a political strategy to break down hegemonic identity categories and reveal a proliferation of gendered and racialized subjectivities.

In my reading of Butler I do find inspiration in the ways she conceives of the body as discursively produced, and particularly in the notion that subjects who have been named in particular ways can also re-inscribe their subjectivities by (re)enacting subversive speech acts and bodily performances. Youdell (2004b) suggests that this concept of discursive agency 'allows us to take account of the range of discursive practices that are non-linguistic, for instance, representations, non-verbal utterances, or performative habitus' (p. 480). Yet, in seeking to undermine the discursive systems of normalization that serve to constitute subjects in 'injurious' ways (Harwood & Rasmussen, 2003), I want to more closely consider how desires and constraints made evident through *the material body* impact upon the processes of subversive self-formation and can work to re-inscribe the meanings of normalizing discourses. Through the concept of performative resignification, Butler seeks to trouble the normalizing function that recourse to biological sex difference plays in naturalizing and disciplining the body, but, in so doing, she does not focus on how the materiality of the body also substantially informs the processes of subversion and proliferates subjectivities. This compels another line of analysis related to the corporeality of the body, and the crucial role that the feelings and experiences that are attached to the body play in constructing new ways of understanding gender and 'race'.

From this stance I turn to dance researchers Susan Foster (1998) and Michael Gard (2003) who support the claim that gender is a social construction – rather than a fixed and objective 'truth' through recourse to biology – and yet argue that the perspective of 'gender as performed' serves to obscure the complex corporeal

processes by which the body comes to be transformed into a locus of discursive agency. Foster (1998), for instance, argues that '(d)ance illuminates the issues at stake in an analysis of gender as performance not only because dance, like gender, consists largely of bodily actions rather than effects of speech, but also because it delineates a clear function for the performer' (p.5). While agreeing that networks of social norms work through performative speech acts in specific conditions to (re)produce gendered subjects, Foster argues that the material experiences of the body are also deeply implicated in this process. In her critique of Butler, Foster argues that 'it is difficult to envision how either performance or performativity extends beyond the verbal realm into nonverbal dimensions of human action' (p.4).

Gard (2003) articulates a similar concern with the abstraction of the lived body in the Butlerian model. He argues that:

I gesture towards a discomfort with (although certainly not an out and out rejection of) more philosophically abstract theories of embodiment (such as Butler, 1990, 1993; Grosz, 1994). Instead I have taken my lead from authors whose focus has been on socially embedded bodies and identities, where structural power relations and everyday interactions produce and reproduce embodied experience... This notion of 'embodied experience' or 'embodied subjectivity' avoids essentializing the body whilst acknowledging that the ways our bodies 'feel' and the 'natural' capacities which are assigned to them are both intensely political matters. (p.212)

Gard's comments suggest that gender and 'race' is felt, experienced, and learned through the body. This point is of considerable import when considering how the young women dancers come to invest themselves into certain discursive subject positions, in relation to certain perceived rewards or pleasures to be gained from these investments. Therefore, it follows that embodied experiences are crucial to the ways the young women negotiate their discursive positioning as the racialized 'other' and come to exist as subjects in their dance spaces.

INSTITUTIONALIZED DANCE SPACES AND THE (RE)PRODUCTION OF DIVIDING PRACTICES

THE RACIAL AND CLASSED BIFURCATION OF THE THOMPSON HIGH SCHOOL DANCE CLASSES

In this section I draw from the understanding of ‘dividing practices’ described in Chapter Five to engage with how the institutionalized dance spaces at Thompson High School serve to categorize and objectivize the young women based on their ‘black’ and lower-class backgrounds. Thompson is a prominent institution in the dance landscape in southwest Springfield that was used by many of the young women in my study. Thompson is a public performing and visual arts ‘magnet’ school which means that both ‘local’ and students from elsewhere in the city of Springfield can participate in the dance classes. The local students attend Thompson full-time and live within the Thompson High School district boundaries. As such, most of these students are from predominantly African-American and lower socio-economic class backgrounds⁴⁸ and have no previous formal dance training. During their first year, these introductory students enroll in a ‘Level One’ dance program that has been described by the director of the dance programs as a ‘dance sampler’. They are required to take one ballet class the entire year, which is supplemented by additional jazz, tap, ballet, and African elective classes that each last for one semester. The few ‘local’ students who have had previous formal dance training have a different pathway and can directly enroll in advanced level classes. Students who have completed the ‘Level One’ classes during their first year can then take courses during their second year which are informally categorized as ‘Level One Plus’. These students take a ballet course that has a small modern dance component for the entire year, and then they will take a supplemental tap and African class for one semester each. The director commented that the scheduling and programming of the introductory morning classes exposes the students to a broad range of dance styles: ‘We encourage the kids to be diverse. That is kind of the unique thing about the program that we can offer these styles. And they get to perform in these styles [during recitals].’ While

⁴⁸ The director of the Thompson dance program says that the racial/ethnic makeup of the morning students is around 90 percent African-American, 5 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent Caucasian.

hip hop dancing was offered previously (and was taken by several of the young women in my study) this class has been cancelled because it was argued that there was not enough money to fund a full-time hip hop dance instructor. Instead, the hip hop classes have been replaced by modern dance classes and taught by the Thompson instructors who have previous training in this genre.

The overwhelming majority of the students taking the morning classes are African-American females. For instance, in the first semester of 2006 there were only two African-American males in these classes. According to the director, '(i)t is really hard to get male students from this school to participate in dance. There is a stigma about taking dance that they fear.' The stigma described here is that many of the male students who take these classes are often labeled by their peers as being gay, and are subsequently subjected to taunting both within the classroom and in the broader school culture from both 'black' men and women. Sasha, whom I described in Chapter Four as a politicized young woman from a 'mixed black' background, describes in the following quote how 'injurious speech acts' (Harwood & Rasmussen, 2003) were used to objectivize the males taking the hip hop class:

- Matt: Tell me about the morning [hip hop] class. Was that the morning classes with the 'blacks'?
- Sasha: Yes.
- Matt: There were more problems with that?
- Sasha: Yes like there were a few people in the class that people thought were gay and they may have (been). They (the African-American students) would call them names, they would talk about them. I mean even if you never said you were gay or not but they still made a big issue.
- Matt: So this was like one person?
- Sasha: Yes like one person in particular that I can think of who made a big issue over it like 'oh he's gay, he's this' and you know, because he danced just as good as the girls did. I think it's just like how they (African-American) were raised culturally, you know, that that is just not something that they accept...

As mentioned previously, these types of injurious speech acts directed towards the 'gay' and 'feminine' young men served to dissuade many of them from

participating in the introductory dance classes. As a result, the majority of the dancers in the morning classes were female.

The full-time 'local' students who progress to the third year of the dance program will take 'Level Two' dance classes in the afternoon. The dance styles offered to the students in the 'Level Two' classes are tap, ballet, and modern. Those who are able to progress into the 'Level Three' courses take tap, ballet, and modern again. The most advanced and exclusive dance classes are the 'Level Four' classes which offer ballet, tap, and jazz. A separate 'Level Four' class also teaches students how to choreograph their own modern dances. All of the afternoon classes are structured into a two-period block, whereas the morning classes were only one period. According to the director, the number of 'local' students diminishes as they progress into the upper level dance courses. He commented that '(t)his is where we run into a problem with the dance.' The overwhelming majority of the 'local' students do not make it to the more advanced afternoon classes and the majority of afternoon classes are filled by the more affluent white 'co-op' students who do not attend Thompson full-time. Most of the 'co-op' students come from other Springfield public high schools and a few of them even come from out of district suburbs and even other cities (one student came from another city that was 50 miles away). These students who are from outside the Springfield Public School District pay a tuition fee to participate in the Thompson dance programs. The primary reason 'co-op' students come to Thompson from all over the Springfield metropolitan area and even other cities is because it is renowned for its elite level dance training. Tara, a full-time student who attends Thompson, commented that '(u)sually when white people come to our school it is usually for our dance program because our dance program is really good here at Thom, so they really do that...' These 'co-op' students are primarily attracted by the opportunity to dance in the high level afternoon classes and in one highly visible performing troupe (the 'In Motion Dance Group', which will be described later).

The program director has commented that the 'local' African-American female students 'love African and hip hop dancing which unfortunately we don't offer in

the afternoon.’ As a result, these women would only be able to take ballet, tap, and modern in the afternoon classes. The majority of these ‘black’ young women do not progress past the first two years of the Thompson dance program. The director has mentioned that about 60 first year ‘local’ students start in the dance program at the introductory level, and only approximately five make it through the entire four years of dancing. He attributes this attrition of ‘local’ students to several factors. Firstly, he believes that many of the ‘local’ females are intimidated by the ‘co-op’ students who have much more previous formal dance training. He commented that:

They [the ‘co-op’ students] have been dancing since three. They have more experience, I think there could be a little bit of intimidation by some of the women who have not had training. I feel like a lot of the dancers who are full time local students, they don’t push themselves to dance in the afternoon.

Secondly, he suggests that class scheduling conflicts prevent many of the young women from taking the afternoon dance classes, and thirdly, that many of the ‘full time local’ female students sign up for the introductory dance classes because they do not want to take a physical education class. At Thompson, students can substitute two years of dance at the introductory level for one year of physical education credit.

However, while these factors undoubtedly play a part in discouraging African-American females from participating in the afternoon dance classes, I would argue that these young women are systematically excluded by the structuring of the dance program. For example, the director notes that many of the ‘local’ young women enjoy hip hop and African dancing, yet these courses are not offered in the afternoon classes. Only classes such as ballet, modern, tap, and jazz are offered. This suggests that the dance program at Thompson works to the privilege formal dance traditions such as modern and ballet (even at the introductory level ballet is the only year-long dance class) whilst African and hip hop dancing remain quite marginalized (evidenced in the replacement of hip hop dancing with modern

dance in the morning dance class program). Participation in modern and ballet dancing requires extensive technical training that is only affordable to those middle class white females who live outside southwest Springfield. As a result, the urban impoverished 'black' females who attend Thompson full time are unable to gain access to the afternoon dance spaces. These afternoon programs have come to primarily cater for the 'white people' that come to Thompson, and as such, their exalted status is based around the exclusion of the 'local' students. Because the structuring of the school dance spaces serves to exclude and disenfranchise the 'local' 'black' students whilst accepting others (primarily white females), it seems likely that these classes also (re)produce dividing practices that serve to 'normalize' and privilege white female bodies whilst excluding and 'othering' the bodies of 'black' African-American females.

My arguments are supported by the following set of quotes from Sara which provide evidence that the school has created a set of practices that support the formation of exclusive female hierarchies that are linked with 'racial' and classed discourses. In Chapter Four I described Sara as an articulate and highly-intelligent Hispanic/French-Canadian young woman who most closely aligned herself and her body with the values and practices associated with white middle class culture. Indeed, she lived furthest away from the impoverished urban core of southwest Springfield and lived a comfortable middle class lifestyle that sharply contrasts with the other young people in my study. Sara participated in several of the dance classes and recitals until the middle of her third year of high school when she acquired a back injury and was unable to participate further. She subsequently worked as a backstage hand for the dance recitals and performances, which afforded her a position from which to provide very insightful comments regarding the inner-workings of the high school dance programs. As such, I will continue to use Sara in the role of 'observer' in order to probe several issues surrounding the body, subjectivity, and social hierarchies throughout this chapter.

From Sara:

Matt: Now did you notice the difference between, let me go back. When you say in the afternoon the girls were whiter than you what do you mean by that?

Sara: Um, one kind of mixed and like the majority of the girls that I knew were just white; mum and dad are both white, blah blah blah. So there wasn't a lot of different minorities; there was a few but pretty much they were just, like they were probably just a handful of non-white dancers in the afternoon class.

Later in the interview:

Matt: And what do you think about that?

Sara: My opinion is that a lot of the people that were in the afternoon classes had previous dance experience because they've had classes and what not. And my honest opinion is that it's because their parents can afford to send them to dance classes and dance school. Whereas a lot of the people that I dance with in the morning it really wasn't that big of a priority. Their parents were like 'oh yeah go to a dance class' or they couldn't afford it, you know or something like that. And well for the main part most of the higher level classes were in the afternoon as well and so a lot of the kids would come for those.

The commentary above indicates that marked 'racial' and class divisions exist in and between the morning and afternoon dance classes. The previous descriptions of the Thomson High School dance classes suggest that the organization and content of the dance classes work as dividing practices and set up hierarchies which include some students and exclude others on the basis of 'race', 'ethnicity', and class. To make the exclusivity of the dance spaces even more apparent, and to set up how 'othering' processes impact upon the young women's self-body relations, I now turn to describe the most exclusive dance spaces that exist in the performing dance ensembles.

'YOU DON'T HAVE TO POINT YOUR TOES': THE DIVIDING PRACTICES OPERATING IN THE PERFORMING DANCE COMPANIES

Thompson sponsors two performing dance companies, the 'Thompson Dance Club' and the nationally-renowned 'In Motion Dance Group'. Much like the

afternoon dance classes, both of these programs are used by mostly non-local students, which suggests the existence of dividing practices in the structuring and content of the dance program. Through the following descriptions I demonstrate that these dividing practices are organized along the lines of ‘race’ and class and work to (re)produce a predominantly white middle class culture in the dance spaces.

According to the program director, students need to be ‘around a “Level Three”’ dancer in order to participate in the ‘Thompson Dance Club’. Dancers who perform well in the ‘Thompson Dance Group’ can be invited to perform with the ‘In Motion Dance Group’. He also commented that sometimes some of the ‘low-end “Level Four”’ dancers are involved in the ‘Thompson Dance Club’. The ‘In Motion Dance Group’ students are considered to be the elite dancers, and the majority of them have training in the ‘Level Four’ classes. Students must audition to be accepted into the ‘In Motion Dance Group’ and admission is a highly competitive process. This is borne out in the following statement made by the director: ‘in the past, we just accepted whomever. We have so many kids auditioning now that we’re at the level of picking and choosing who comes into our program’. The privileging of the ‘In Motion Dance Group’ within the school and in the broader Springfield community created a sense of resentment amongst the ‘Thompson Dance Club’ members because they felt that they were considered to be in a lower-level program. According to Sasha, these feelings of animosity towards the ‘In Motion’ dancers were exacerbated because students who did not make the ‘In Motion Dance Group’ were almost always unconditionally accepted into the ‘Thompson Dance Club’. This served to create the notion that the ‘Thompson Dance Club’ was a default program for those individuals who did not get into the ‘In Motion’ ensemble. In response to their devalued positioning, many members of the ‘Thompson Dance Club’ labeled those who participated in or tried out for the ‘In Motion Dance Group’ as arrogant or ‘uppity’. Sara, who participated in both the afternoon dance classes and the ‘Thompson Dance Club’, made comments that support this claim:

But a lot of the ‘Thom’ students that took classes or weren’t in the company didn’t really, like they would really think they (the ‘In Motion Dance Group’) were so rude and snotty because they would never talk to us because they would just sit in their rooms. But then they’re just like ‘oh well I think they (the “In Motion Dance Group”) are such good dancers’ like that’s what they would always blame it on, like ‘they think they are so good they don’t want to talk to anybody’ blah blah blah. And it’s like well you are not exactly making the attempt either. But yeah, people were always like ‘yeah those “In Motion Dance Group” dancers are snotty’ etc...

While the hierarchical structuring of the performance groups along the lines of ability was intended to help facilitate the progression of dancers into more advanced levels of dance, it has systematically created conditions whereby the primarily white middle class females in the ‘In Motion Dance Group’ come to exist as the norm. In particular, it is the privileging of ballet that sets up these conditions. The ‘In Motion’ students perform a diverse range of dance styles – their compositions draw upon jazz, ballet, tap, and hip hop, and modern styles. However, as the following quote from the dance program director demonstrates, students who want to participate in the ‘In Motion Dance Group’ need to be ‘classically’ trained:

They need to have classical training in dance. They need it. It is the foundation of jazz and modern and other styles of dance. So it’s good to have a background in ballet. I’m looking for dancers who can move and those who can pick up material quickly, who are smart. When you have had classical training you’re disciplined, you learn discipline, how to pick up material quickly.

However, as argued previously, classical ballet training is often expensive and unavailable to many of the ‘local’ urban impoverished young women. As a result, the ‘In Motion’ dancers are overwhelmingly middle class white ‘co-op’ females from outside of southwest Springfield. Sasha noted that the ‘In Motion Dance Group’ was comprised of primarily white young women, although it also had a few ‘ethnic’ students. However, she felt that the few ‘black’ people in this program were from more affluent white neighborhoods. Sara also added that ‘for the most part they [the ‘In Motion’ females] were all very wealthy; their parents

were at least'. Even though the 'In Motion Dance Group' was designed to incorporate a diverse range of dance styles, by setting up classical ballet as the standard this program serves to exclude the overwhelming majority of the lower-income 'local' students.

In comparison to the 'In Motion Dance Group', Sasha described the 'Thompson Dance Club' as more of a 'cultural mix' because it was comprised of 'black', white, Asian, and Hispanic students. She described how the 'Thompson Dance Club' students had more different interests and tastes, representing a wide range of different musical and dance styles: 'some [dancers] were strong in ballet, some were strong in hip hop'. She described modern dancing as being 'like broken ballet': 'it's like a free version, you don't have to point your toes'. What is most crucial about these references to 'broken ballet' and 'you don't have to point your toes' is that they suggest the possibilities that highly-technical dance forms such as ballet are contested by some of the young women, even though they are set up as the standard within the high school programs.

The previous commentary adds to the previous argument that the structuring and content of the dance programs work to devalue particular bodily practices that are linked with inner-city 'blackness'. Dance styles such as hip hop and African that are favored by the 'local' 'black' students are marginalized or absent within the curriculum of the performance groups, as well as in the morning and afternoon classes. Subsequently, the primary line of inquiry in this chapter involves understanding how these 'local' students respond to the ways ballet, tap, jazz, and modern dance traditions privileging predominantly white and/or middle class modalities of the body come to be deployed in the Thompson dance spaces. This requires a close analysis of the ways the young 'black' women take up multiple and nuanced subjectivities by engaging with the dividing practices operating in the dance spaces and the dance program more widely.

‘IT’S NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE BUT HOW YOU DANCE’: ENGAGING WITH THE ‘OBJECTIVIZATION’ OF THE ‘FAT’ AND ‘BLACK’ FEMALE ‘OTHER’

In this section, I discuss how the dividing practices that were (re)produced within the dance classes and performance groups came to impact upon Sasha. Through the (re)production of these dividing practices, the school dance spaces worked as sites of female conflict through which particular forms of power came to be exercised by the students and teachers. In particular, Sasha’s exclusion and marginalization within the dance spaces due to her physically larger ‘black’ body demonstrates that particular forms of femininity are integral to accessing these spaces and for the young women to get the most desirable roles. In comparison to Sara, whose more Anglo-centric body shape and size and even lighter skin tones afforded her a much more neutral view of the dance program, Sasha came to take up a much more politically charged stance that was aligned with her positioning as a ‘bigger’ ‘black’ female. As such, her comments are particularly illustrative of the ways the young women in my study engage with dominant discursive hierarchies which located them within different locations of power. Through a close reading of Sasha’s remarks, I argue that power is disseminated within these institutional spaces in ways that most often privilege individuals and bodies that most closely conform to a Western dance culture that (re)produces white middle class forms of femininity.

As I mentioned previously in Chapter Four, Sasha’s working class background afforded her access to some private dance training, which directly translated into a form of physical capital that allowed her to participate in a range of dance classes and programs, both within and outside of Thompson High School. This distinguished her from the urban impoverished Haitians, Irene and Maureen, whose more marginalized positioning and disenfranchisement from institutional dance will be discussed in the next section. Sasha participated in the African and hip hop dance classes in the morning, and took ballet and more advanced African classes in the afternoon. After school she participated in the ‘Thompson Dance

Club’ performing group. She also danced once a year in a local Kwanzaa⁴⁹ festival. As commented in Chapter Four, Sasha took up self-body relations within her dance spaces that were indicative of a highly politicized ‘mixed black’ subject-position. Because she was able to engage with the complexities of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ in a very critical and self-aware manner, coupled with her experiences within a range of dance spaces, Sasha provides a useful entry point from which to examine the hierarchies that characterize the range of dance classes and programs, as well as the young women’s resistance to the rationales of institutionalized dance.

In the quote below, Sasha describes how she is able to ‘fall into’ different ‘moods’. This seems to be indicative of her ability to fluidly take up a range of ‘racial’ subjectivities. What sets Sasha apart from her peers in the study was that she was very explicit about drawing from a range of subjectivities in order to contest the technologies deployed in her physical activity spaces.

- Matt: How would you describe yourself, your own ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ background?
- Sasha: I’d say I’m ‘black’ but I’m mixed with ‘black’ like Native American. But you know the majority of the time I identify with ‘black’.
- Matt: In what way do you mean that you’re ‘black’?
- Sasha: Just African descent. Both my parents are ‘half black’ but they are also mixed with something else. So that is what I identify with the most. So culturally nationality wise, that’s just me.
- Matt: What about the ‘mixed’ part of your background how do you feel about that?
- Sasha: I tend to identify sometimes with my Native American side because I just find Native American culture interesting. So I try to look into that. I have met my great grandmother who is Cherokee Indian but as far as the white that I’m mixed with, the only person in my family that I speak to that is white is my grandmother, because all her relatives kind of distanced themselves from us. So I hardly ever just say I’m white or the only time I mention being white is when I say I’m mixed with it. But as far as the typical white culture, you know, I can fall

⁴⁹ Kwanzaa is a non-denominational African-American holiday incorporating African culture and ancestry.

into that background, that area, and most of my friends can also do that. I have a lot of white friends but at the same time a lot of 'black' friends; it's just depending on what mood I'm in.

Compared to the other young women in the study, Sasha's commentary most poignantly illustrates how the young women invest in non-normative self-body relations by fluidly taking up both essentialist and 'hybrid' subjectivities. This is not to say that 'blackness' does not exist, or to 'negate its operative power as a cultural principle in the social constitution of identities' (Ang, 1998, p.227), but rather that 'blackness' is differentially constituted by gender, 'race', and class discourses associated with the body, and must be understood as plural and proliferating rather than fixed. Sasha's talk about deploying resistant bodily practices and speech acts in the dance spaces demonstrate how she intentionally and tacitly engaged in practices of reinscription, in order to take up a more favorable position in discourse.

Sasha describes in the following excerpt how the body hierarchies in her afternoon school dance spaces were (re)produced by her teachers as well as other (predominantly white female) students. In this quote (also quoted in Chapter Four), Sasha details how she is 'othered' by the 'white girls' in the advanced dance classes who 'worked on' their bodies in relation to 'skinny' dancer stereotypes. This commentary follows other excerpts whereby Sasha described how the 'black' or African-American young women felt ostracized because they were perceived as being too heavy or slow. As such, the following comments illustrate the 'racial' bifurcation that exists in the advanced level dance spaces between the white and 'black' females and the ways positions of power are bestowed upon those 'white' young women who are seemingly able to discipline and regulate their bodies. In this way, the body becomes the primary site where institutional power is exercised and becomes the locus around which the female hierarchies are sustained.

- Matt: Tell me about what you were saying about girls talking about you or the competition. Is that ever apparent in any of your dance spaces?
- Sasha: Well mainly in my African⁵⁰ classes at Thompson was the predominantly white students because a lot of the times they had this stereotypical dancer in their mind and my physical appearance doesn't fit into their little mould. So like you know, I wasn't as skinny as the other girls, I wasn't as short as the other girls, you know. So of course they were like 'okay, why are *you* in this class?' Just little things I had to struggle with, even with some of the teachers, you know, telling me that I needed to lose a little weight for this or I need to work on, just work on my body in general. I mean it wasn't a big deal with me because I already had the self-confidence and it didn't affect me. But I've seen it affect other girls that weighed more than some of the other girls or didn't have as good feet or couldn't jump as high. So I was just glad not to have to deal with that. Every time that I don't have to deal with something like that is good. But at Thompson in the afternoon classes some of the girls had real bad problems with their weight and a few of the girls were actually either anorexic or bulimic⁵¹ and just basically did anything to try to keep that stereotypical body type.
- Matt: What would you say that stereotypical body type was?
- Sasha: Well like really slim girls, perfect height, not too short, not too tall, about five seven, five eight, you know, and they probably weighed like one hundred and fifteen pounds and had like no meat on their bones, just skinny for no reason. But I'm not saying there is anything wrong with that body type but if that is not how you are then don't try to kill yourself in order to get there, you know. I mean like they thought that if you weren't skinny or close to being that skinny then you weren't going to be as good as a dancer and what they had to realize is that it's not about what you look like but how you dance. There were a lot of times where they were proven wrong with their little theories.
- Matt: Who were they?
- Sasha: The other girls, mainly the girls that come from other schools... They, never directly to me but I've overheard them talking

⁵⁰ African dance classes are no longer offered in the afternoon. In 2006, the only dance traditions taught are jazz, tap, modern, and ballet.

⁵¹ Thomas (2003) notes that 'there is evidence to suggest that the incidence of eating disorders is comparatively high in professional theatre dance in the west where the pressures to conform to the aesthetic ideal of a super-slim, prepubescent dancing body, particularly in ballet, are high' (p.38). While these young women are not professional caliber dancers, they are some of the top ballet and modern dancers in Springfield and could easily take up these practices in order to achieve the 'super-slim' ideal that is associated with higher levels of performance.

about other girls, about how fat they were and ‘oh she is *not* gonna get cast in this dance because she is bigger and she looks sloppy’, you know, just talking about things and then it turns out that it wasn’t always the skinniest girl that got the lead role because the choreographer liked the way she danced.

In the context of Sasha’s previous comments about the ‘objectivization’ of the ‘black’ female dancers because of their devalued ‘overweight’ or ‘bigger’ bodies, the quote above powerfully illustrates the ways negative stereotypes associated with the ‘fat black female body’ (Shaw, 2005, p.151) are deployed by the more affluent white girls and the teachers. Harwood and Rasmussen (2003), drawing from Butler’s (1997) notion of ‘performativity’, make the claim that these types of ‘injurious speech acts’ work through broader institutional structures and are thus invested with historical, social, and cultural power. In this instance, the ‘thin’ white bodies come to be positioned as more capable and valuable. These kinds of bodies are able to be exchanged into a higher form of cultural capital in the context of the dance classes and come to represent the normative values and practices of the middle class. As such, the white females are considered to be more capable of performing the dance routines. In comparison, the locally-based ‘fat’ and ‘sloppy’ ‘black’ girls are assigned a devalued form of physical capital and from this perspective are considered to be less talented. In this way, the performative acts of the white girls which are aligned with the racist and classist institutional structures of dance speak powerfully to the discursive construction of young ‘black’ women such as Sasha.

As I argued previously in Chapter Four, in response to the marginalized positioning of her body, Sasha makes references to the white girls’ problems with anorexia and bulimia. In this way ‘othering’ comes to be a powerful means by which Sasha comes to feel empowered and survive as a ‘mixed black’ female. This ‘othering’ of the white females is a form of retribution that is described by Wright (1991a). In Wright’s study of male and female gymnasts, she notes that the boys’ awkwardness and inability to perform certain movements was a source of delight for many of the young women. It provided the young women with ‘one

small opportunity for retribution in the face of the far more widespread harassment of the girls by the boys' (p.132). However, Wright also argues that this retribution 'was unlikely to change the boys' attitudes to girls, or to change the more persistent and pervasive sports discourse that represented the girls as inferior and inadequate in comparison to the boys' (p.132). In a similar sense, then, the way Sasha and some of the other marginalized 'black' women consider the white girls to be anorexic or bulimic is a form of retribution towards those who have positioned them as 'bigger' and looking 'sloppy'. What is worth contemplating is whether this form of retribution can be considered an insurrectionary speech act that would re-inscribe once and for all the widely-established discourses that serve to constitute the 'fat black female body' (Shaw, 2005) as disavowed and subjugated. Because the devaluation of 'black' bodies is also (re)produced by some of the teachers themselves it is even more difficult for young women such as Sasha to subvert the dominant body discourses of the dance spaces. Under the powerful gaze of the teachers they will have to (re)enact a range of non-normative practices in order to get the roles they want:

- Matt: Let's go back to talking about the dance and you were saying in the afternoons there is a different crowd and stuff like that. You were talking about some of the girls were talking about being skinny and things like that. Can you tell me about the involvement of the teachers with that?
- Sasha: Well some of the teachers were just fine with it and didn't care too much if you were overweight or not, you know, or people thought you should be. But some of the teachers would actually prefer to have a skinny dancer over one that actually had some meat on their bones. So I've seen people rehearse for parts in dances and I feel that maybe the one that weighed a little more danced better and put more heart into the performance.
- Matt: You think so?
- Sasha: I think so. In a couple of cases I've actually seen it and sometimes the teacher will pick someone that did a job that was kind of halfway, no effort but they were skinnier and prettier and they just liked the way they looked better than the way the other person danced.
- Matt: Did you say you always think that the bigger girl always dances better?

Sasha: Not always but I've seen a couple of cases where a bigger girl, you know, maybe I think it's because the skinnier girls think 'Okay I'm skinny so I don't have to try as hard' or 'I'm dancing just because I have a dancer's body'. But like a lot of the bigger girls, they are dancing because they like to dance and because they know that they have to compete with the skinnier girls I think sometimes they put more effort into it and they try harder. But I mean that isn't always the case but I, myself, I know when I'm auditioning for a role, I try twice as hard because I know I'll have to because sometimes there is that stereotype. But you know there are other girls that don't really care.

Sasha's comments make it clear that the dividing practices operating in the 'elite' school dance spaces serve to privilege bodies that represent disciplinary work in the form of a white 'slim' body. Simultaneously, these practices work to categorize the young 'black' women who are considered to be too large as the 'Other'. These young women become categorized as incompetent and become separated from the majority of the white females in the dance class who are considered to be 'normal'. Yet, in spite of her objectified positioning within the dance spaces, I would argue that the range of Sasha's bodily practices do serve to trouble the constituting discourses which favor white thin bodies in the elite dance spaces. Using Butler's concept of intentional performative acts that can disrupt dominant discursive fields, Youdell (2004a) demonstrates how a young male ballet dancer challenges the normative discourses associated with the sex-gender-sexuality constellation by deploying a non-ordinary gay identity in a school setting. She argues that when 'Scott' (re)enacts a modern dance performance in front of his school he serves to reinscribe 'gayness' by presenting a gay identity that is stereotypically both masculine *and* homosexual. This previously unknown deployment of 'gayness' becomes both intelligible and unintelligible to the audience because it couples normative physical masculinity with non-normative male homosexuality. His performative act takes on a non-ordinary meaning in the school because it troubles the discourses that have constituted the homosexual male as being unmasculine/feminine. Similarly, I argue here that by putting more 'heart' and 'effort' into her dance performances and trying 'twice as hard', Sasha is able to subvert the constitutive discourses which have encoded the 'fat black

female body' (Shaw, 2005) as 'sloppy', and thus incapable and unfeminine. While her highly emotive performances of the body could be read as reinforcing the popular belief that 'blacks' can dance more 'physically' and 'naturally' than whites, her dance performances also undermine the biological-'race'-gender constellation that has served to devalue the 'fat black female body' (Shaw, 2005). By providing highly emotional and accomplished dance performances, Sasha is able to recoup a racialized female subjectivity that has been previously marked as 'sloppy', and thus incapable and unfeminine. Her accomplished bodily performances inscribe a modality of 'blackness' and 'fatness' that has been previously unintelligible in the white middle class discursive frame of the elite dance spaces. While the deployment of her non-ordinary bodily performances often goes unrewarded (according to Sasha the 'skinnier' females who don't try as hard still get most of the parts), there is evidence that the teachers are beginning to accept Sasha's non-ordinary performances. Sasha's comments suggest that the larger African-American females are sometimes able to get the better roles, which seems to indicate that the (re)citation of her performative acts works to re-alter the power relations within the dance spaces. This also suggests that Sasha is able to garner a sense of empowerment because her previously devalued and subjugated body is sometimes considered by the teachers to be *more* capable than those that it was supposed to emulate.

Furthermore, I also argue Sasha's increased sense of empowerment and value becomes evident when she verbally enacts retribution towards the white females. By abjecting the 'skinny' bodies of the 'white girls', Sasha is able to resist their injurious speech acts that have constituted her as undesirable and incapable whilst also re-constituting and legitimizing her subject-position as the 'fat' and 'black' female. Later in this chapter I will further describe how the minutiae of Sasha's practices serves to reinscribe 'blackness' and 'fatness', thus subverting the discursive fields that have served to position her as the racialized female 'Other'.

IRENE: BECOMING THE 'OTHER' IN RELATION TO 'BLACK' AND 'TOO WHITEY' SPACES

In the previous section I demonstrated that Sasha, despite her marginalized and subsequently resistant positioning within the advanced and exclusive dance spaces, was still invested in particular normative notions of dance. Sasha could access the more elite afternoon classes and performing programs because her previous technical training afforded her a more valued form of embodied capital, even though the dividing practices within these spaces served to constitute her as the 'fat' and 'black' female 'Other'. While Sasha's comments provide a clear indication that racialized hierarchies exist in the more advanced dance spaces, whereby white middle class females come to be constructed as the norm while 'black' females are constituted as the 'other', the following comments from Irene demonstrate that she is considered to be the 'Other' in the context of the predominantly African-American-populated introductory morning classes. By suggesting that the morning institutional dance spaces do not only (re)produce 'black'/white dividing practices, her commentary complicates the previous analysis. Furthermore, Irene's comments provide evidence that by engaging with these social patterns young 'black' women come to take up nuanced 'racial' and 'ethnic' subjectivities.

In comparison to Sasha who was able to participate in a range of dance classes and programs at Thompson, Irene was only able to access the introductory dance classes at Thompson High School during her first year of enrollment. In several of the interviews Irene described how she avoided taking the morning school dance classes because they were set up in a way that was too restrictive. Irene often described feeling excluded by the structure of the courses – she could not take the one class that she liked (African) because the school system forced her to also take additional dance classes (ballet, tap, and hip hop) which she found undesirable for a variety of reasons.

While Irene wanted to take African dance class during her first year of high school, she recalled that it was either full or it didn't fit into her school schedule.

By default Irene ended up taking introductory tap and hip hop dance classes. Irene later tried to take African dance class when she returned for her final year of high school, but she was restricted by the organization of the dance classes. In order to take the African dance class she also had to take a ballet class. This requirement to take ballet made her quit the African dance class:

- Matt: So, um, you would like to African dance if you could?
Irene: Uh, hmm. But, I had it in the beginning of the school year but they told me I have to take ballet with it, and I don't want to do ballet (chuckles).
Matt: How come?
Irene: It's stupid (laughs). I just don't like to do 'woo, hoo!' you know how that stupid music I don't like that, it's boring, I like something that's exciting...
Matt: Like...?
Irene: African dance (laughs).
Matt: You think it's exciting?
Irene: Yeah, I mean you go, you move places and it's, I mean, it's fast and , um, ballet's like slow rhythms, I don't like that I never liked ballet anyways, so. Probably why I don't like it now. But... hmmm, they tried to have me take and I was like 'naww.'
Matt: Where was this at?
Irene: At Thompson. Cuz I told them I only wanted to take African dance and they was 'oh, okay' but I when I started school they told me I had to take two dances for it to count for my credits, I just told them 'forget it' I don't want to learn anymore. I took African when I was, um, at the Smith Arts Center⁵², and, um, what's that, in middle school I did that. So that's how I ended up liking African dance.

The previous excerpt illustrates Irene's extreme dissatisfaction with the structuring and content of the introductory-level dance classes. Irene's comments point to the ways that the school has organized a set of timetables, class requirements, and curricula that serve to regulate students and their bodies and produce normative ways of being (Gard, 2003). The organization and curriculum of the morning dance classes provide her with limited options from which to dance in the high school – in order to take African dance she had to also take ballet, even though she did not want to. Furthermore, this institutional structuring

⁵² The name of the community center has been changed.

of the dance spaces works in tandem with particular ‘racial’ discourses in ways that serve to exclude Irene from taking the introductory-level dance classes. Her comments suggest that specific dance spaces have been encoded as white as well as ‘black’, which points to the operation of ‘dividing practices’ and social hierarchies structured along the lines of ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’ in these different spaces. Yet, these dance spaces fail to engage Irene, who desires to exist in a state of ‘in-between-ness’ that is linked with her ‘black’ ‘ethnic’ background. Irene’s commentary about the high school dance set up illustrates how, despite her seemingly ‘black’ background, she comes to understand her self as existing outside of dominant ‘black’/white binaries. For instance, in the following excerpt Irene discusses her dissatisfaction with hip hop classes in the school which she says consisted of ‘too many ‘black’ people’ who were irritating and ‘just talk too much head’. Simultaneously, she rejects the introductory ballet class as being ‘too whitey’:

- Matt: What did you think about the hip hop?
Irene: It was boring, I didn’t like it that much, but it was cool otherwise. Too many ‘black’ people in one room, it gets irritating.
Matt: How come?
Irene: I don’t know they just talk too much head, they just talk too much. They won’t shut up.
Matt: How come you didn’t take dance during other years?
Irene: Because I didn’t want to, that was just too much stress for me, you just had to dress down everyday.
Matt: Why didn’t you take the ballet class?
Irene: I didn’t want to do ballet it’s too whitey for me. ‘Cause I don’t like all that music crap. I wanted to take African but I never did.

The commentary above points to the ways Irene considers the high school dance spaces to be proliferating oppressive modalities of ‘race’ – ballet is ‘too whitey’ and hip hop is too ‘black’. This suggests that each school dance class has set up particular discursive conditions whereby specific hegemonic forms of ‘race’ have taken hold.

In the previous discussion around Sasha I demonstrated that certain advanced level dance spaces (re)produced gendered hierarchies based around the ‘normalizing’ of ‘whiteness’. Irene’s comments here suggest the existence of social hierarchies that are structured in ways that privilege particular forms of ‘blackness’. It is surprising that Irene considers the institutionalized hip hop class to be too boring or irritating given that she enjoys hip hop dancing in her house with her friends after school. I argue that Irene comes to find very little value in the introductory hip hop dance spaces because she seeks to distance herself from what she considers to be an obnoxious ‘black’ African-American culture of dance. In other excerpts she described how both African-Americans in Spring Park would often ‘talk too much crap’ to her. She said that the ‘black’ men would hoot and holler at her when she was swimming with her baby, or make fun of her when she was running in the park. The ‘black’ women would make fun of her clothes and say that they looked better on them. She categorized this type of behavior as ‘acting too “black”’ or like ‘crackheads’. It is likely that certain social practices that are (re)produced by the African-American females⁵³ in the morning hip hop classes would similarly serve to make Irene feel uncomfortable. It is through this understanding of African-American men, women, and culture that Irene comes to distinguish herself as a ‘black’ ‘ethnic’ Haitian subject.

Irene’s inability to access the introductory morning dance classes mean that she would be unable to progress into the afternoon dance classes or performing groups. She does not have the financial means to attend expensive private classes that would bring about a more valued form of bodily capital. As described previously by Sasha, these elite spaces are oriented towards white middle class modes of femininity and require certain knowledges and ways of moving that she would not have. Irene’s comments illustrate how the structuring and curricula of the high school dance program works in tandem with dominant ‘racial’ discourses to exclude or constrain some of the young women from using them.

⁵³ The director of the Thompson dance programs has commented that the hip hop dance classes were almost always exclusively taken by African-American females.

‘MAUREEN’S STYLE’: (RE)ENACTING CULTURAL ‘HYBRIDITY’ IN AN ‘INFORMAL’ DANCE SPACE

In the previous section I argued that Irene was excluded and constrained from using the morning dance classes because of the institutional set up and content of the dance classes. Furthermore, the discursive conditions within some of the introductory high school dance spaces (re)produced social practices that were constructed along the lines of ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’, which served to foreclose the possibility that a young women from an ‘ethnic’ background could find value in them. Because many of the young women in my study also danced in ‘informal’ night clubs and community festivals, I now turn to examine the different sets of discursive practices that exist in these non-institutional dance spaces. Continuing the analysis that was made previously with Sasha, I argue here that Maureen, a ‘black’ Haitian female, also (re)enacts a politics of resistance through her subversive bodily performances and speech acts in order to recoup her deficit positioning as the racialized ‘black’ female. In this analysis I continue to draw from the concept of ‘performativity’ because it usefully challenges the ontological stability of essentialist categories such as ‘black’ and ‘female’ by demonstrating that they are not ‘real’, but are rather constituted by repeated performative acts. Yet, as outlined in the opening of this chapter, an understanding of the body as performative can also serve to negate the corporeality of the body and subsume the crucial role that feelings and experiences of the material body plays in resignifying conventional ‘truths’. This necessitates that I pay close attention to the impacts of the material body in the processes of resignification, particularly because I demonstrated earlier in this thesis that the desire for bodily pleasure plays a significant role in the ways young women come to reinscribe their ‘ethnic’ subjectivities in relation to the normalizing discourses around them.

Maureen loved to dance. This becomes evident in the following excerpt where Maureen describes her enjoyment of dancing to a range of different dance styles in the nightclubs. The ways in which Maureen describes her dancing and her audiences’ appreciative responses to it would suggest that she is a highly

competent dancer. It is dance spaces such as the 'Mexican' salsa club that provide her with a sense of competency and empowerment through the kinaesthetic movement of her body, as illustrated in the quote below:

Matt: Why do you like dancing?

Maureen: I don't know just because I do, I love dancing. I know how to like, I do hip hop, African, salsa, merengue, cumbia; I love all kinds of dancing. I don't know I just love music and I love dancing to it. But still now from time to time I will go to a salsa club just to go dancing. I just love it.

Matt: What is it like when you go dancing?

Maureen: I have fun, I have a lot of fun. I will dance my behind off, it's really, really fun. That's another thing that takes my mind off things.

Maureen's comments seem to indicate that she enjoys dancing because it provides her with a space from which to move her body in an uninhibited and pleasurable way. Her dancing brings forth a feeling of bodily freedom because she is able to master and move between different dance styles in a highly-competent manner. The ways in which Maureen comes to feel empowered by moving her body in a 'wild' and energetic fashion is made further evident in the following extended excerpt. Again it is the 'Mexican' salsa club that provides her with the ability to dance in her own unique 'style' – there are no institutional restrictions governing what types of dances she can perform:

Matt: What's 'Maureen's Style'?

Maureen: (laughs) If you put it that way, 'Maureen's Style' is very dramatic, and freaky, and wild, and its wild, so that's my dance.

Matt: In what ways, what's wild about it?

Maureen: When I dance, I just do everything, with my all, I just go wild with it, and you can just put all your energy in it, and everybody is like, and it just gives you energy, that's what's wild to me, moving your body, and how my face looks like, and not paying attention to anything else, and freaky is (laughs).

Matt: What do you do?

Maureen: (laughs) Freaky is just how I get down.

Matt: With other people? With a partner?

Maureen: (laughs) Dancing with a partner, or by myself, one of the things I mean about being dramatic, is I'll pull the guy's hair, just

everything, I'll drop, and I'll crawl, I do everything, it just depends (laughs).

Matt: Where do you dance at now?

Maureen: At my house, in my room, in my mirror.

Matt: But you like to perform, where do you perform now?

Maureen: I don't perform now, but if it's my first time going back, but when I get on the floor, I'm into it, I just, as soon as I take off, I'm gone, I don't worry about being silly, or nothing about that.

Matt: Do you dance in front of people now, or in parties?

Maureen: Last time I did, I went to a Mexican club, because I wanted to salsa dance.

Matt: How do you like that?

Maureen: I love that, I love salsa dancing

Matt: Where did you go dancing?

Maureen: We went to Club Salsa⁵⁴ on 15th, I like salsa dancing, I like meringue too, I love watching it, and its dancing in heels and that's what's cool to me, I like dressing cool and heels, so when I go... when we went there, we were like the only two 'black' people there, they were like surprised, and everyone was like staring at us, they saw us do salsa, they went crazy, so it was cool.

Matt: Do you switch around different styles?

Maureen: I switch a lot, and I just go crazy, if I go dancing, I can't go and do, I don't know, I come back the way I look, I don't do that.

The previous excerpts illustrate the ways Maureen was able to use a non-institutional dance space to move her body in an uninhibited, pleasurable, and erotic way. While the high school dance spaces provide boundaries around what types of dances are able to be performed and subsequently work to discipline and normalize the bodies of the young women, Maureen was able to refashion the 'Mexican' dance club into a space of hybridity and disorder. In doing so, she was able to transform and recoup her self as a 'black' 'ethnic' female subject. Only the discursive frame of the 'Mexican' salsa club affords her possibilities to 'switch it around', go 'crazy', and, as she says, not come back the way she was before. In this space Maureen is able to (re)enact a 'hybrid' diasporic subjectivity through her bodily performances in ways that point to the artificiality of essentialist categories of 'race' and culture which are often associated with specific forms of dance. According to dance researcher Susan Foster (1998) '(m)ale and female bodies, bodies of different color and racial attributes may or may not evidence

⁵⁴ The name of the dance club has been changed.

vocabularies or styles of movement associated with their sexual or racial identities... They may cite other dances or dance traditions as part of their danced argument' (p. 8).

In Maureen's dance 'argument' she not only (re)cites 'black' hip hop and African dance styles through her body, but also (re)enacts a range of dance styles including 'Latino/a' salsa, cumbia, and merengue. In this way, Maureen troubles the discursive frame operating in the 'Mexican' club as well as the wider dominant discursive field by fluidly (re)citing particular dance forms that have been culturally established to be linked with specific 'races', ethnicities, and cultures. This demonstrates how performatives which have worked to (re)produce culturally established meanings through (re)citation can also 'misfire'. This in turn opens a space from which new performative meanings, and, ultimately, new forms of subjectivity, can be reinscribed. This point is argued for by Youdell (2004a), who contends that 'performatives can always "misfire" (72) and so have unexpected effects... performatives can mean something else and, therefore, the subjects produced through performatives can "be" someone else' (p.205). Through her 'hybrid' bodily practices, Maureen is able to trouble the performatively-sedimented meanings which have come to establish certain dance forms and modes of subjectivity as 'authentic' within the 'Mexican' club. Yet, at the same time, it is only the 'Mexican' salsa club space that allows her to 'switch it around' and go 'crazy'. Through these performative acts Maureen is able to disrupt the meanings associated with the 'black' female 'Other' and take up a subjectivity that comes to signify a more 'hybrid' 'ethnic' sense of self. What remains to be seen is whether or not Maureen deliberately invokes this 'hybrid' subject-position. Her subversive bodily practices might be the unintentional outcome of her pursuit of bodily pleasure. Further adding to the complexity and contradictory nature of her resistant subject-position, Maureen often speaks her self as a 'black' Haitian female even as her bodily practices invoke 'hybridity'.

DISCUSSION

CONSTRUCTING SUBJECTIVITIES BY ENGAGING THE DISCURSIVE FRAMES OF INSTITUTIONAL AND 'INFORMAL' DANCE SPACES

Earlier in this chapter, Sasha described how the afternoon dance classes and 'elite' performing groups served to (re)produce 'dividing practices' that worked to 'other' the larger bodies of 'black' females and render them as incompetent. Irene's commentary in the previous section suggests that the introductory dance classes are set up in ways that exclude many 'local' 'black' young women from using them. In addition, certain dance classes such as ballet and hip hop work to (re)produce oppositional forms of hegemonic 'whiteness' and 'blackness' and, through the (re)production of certain social practices, serve to constrain the young women whose subjectivities fall outside the discursive frame of these spaces from participating. In comparison, Maureen's talk about the 'Mexican' salsa club demonstrates that 'informal' dance spaces can (re)produce specific discursive practices that provide the young 'ethnic' women with the possibilities of rupturing 'black'/white binaries. Taken together, the different sets of social practices operating in the institutional and 'informal' spaces provides a crucial point of entry from which to analyze how these dance spaces provided Irene, Maureen, and Sasha with the discursive resources through which they could construct their pluralized and shifting 'racial' and 'ethnic' 'black' subjectivities.

It is striking that both Maureen and Irene were unable to make use of the introductory level dance classes at Thompson. Irene made it clear that she was dissuaded from taking these dance classes because of the ways they were organized by the school. Also, she described how 'black' and white social practices were deployed in these spaces and made her feel uncomfortable. While Maureen never gave her reasons for not participating in these introductory dance spaces, I would argue that she was likely to be excluded or constrained from using the high school dance spaces in a similar way as Irene because of her 'black' 'ethnic' background. In the context of the Thompson dance program, both of their bodies provide them with a devalued form of embodied capital linked to their lower class and 'black' 'ethnic' backgrounds. Because they were not involved in

the introductory level courses, they were then unable to participate in the more exclusive advanced classes and performance groups. And while they both had previous dance experiences in African dance traditions (both in Haiti and in the United States), proficiency in this dance genre in itself would not give them access to the more technical and disciplinary elite programs, particularly the 'In Motion Dance Group' which requires extensive classical ballet training. I contend that the way classical ballet training is seen as a crucial requirement for admission into the elite Thompson High School dance spaces is linked to widespread assumptions that ballet is the most 'civilized' form of dance (Thomas, 2003). The way ballet has been historically positioned as the highest level of dance is noted by Mills (1997):

This hierarchical construct places ballet at the center of any aesthetic discussion of dance in general and especially African dance at the periphery. Students of dance in the West learn early that ballet is the pinnacle of the dance world and 'ethnic dance' (African dance, Asian, Native American, folk dance) is at the lower rung. (p.154)

This follows a line of reasoning whereby 'black' bodies participating in African dance are seen as representing 'natural' or 'ethnic' qualities. African dancers, for example, have been historically and culturally constructed as being 'primitive':

A review of the historical literature reveals the various ways in which African dance has been labeled as barbaric, primitive... Average descriptions of performances often included such notions of 'wild gyrations,' 'loose-limbed bodies flinging around the stage,' and the general undisciplined nature of the performance. (Mills, 1997, p.146)

In contrast, the bodily movements of ballet dancers have come to signify a higher level of artistic or aesthetic performance (Mills, 1997, p.144). As a result, performers of 'black' dance forms such as African or hip hop are seen as embodying 'power, focus, and energy' but lacking in 'technical skills and the

discipline required of high-level performers' (Desmond, 1997, p.145). As mentioned previously in this chapter, the dance program director values ballet for its ability to instill young people with a sense of discipline. Because ballet is prominently figured into the dance program, the majority of the high school dance classes and programs are structured and taught in ways that support more 'technical' and 'disciplinary' ways of moving the body. In doing so, they serve to exclude those young 'black' women who are seen as embodying more 'energetic' and 'primitive' modes of dance. In particular, the upper-level classes and the performance programs came to be used almost exclusively by the white female 'co-op' students who were able to pass the entrance auditions because of their previous (and expensive) technical training in dance. This technical training is seen by the dance instructors as representing one's capacity for self-discipline. While Maureen is able to captivate the crowds in a 'Mexican' salsa dance club with her innovative bodily performances, she would be excluded from performing in the institutional dance spaces which emphasize technical proficiency and an ability to be disciplined. Subsequently, the most prestigious and elite dance spaces are primarily inhabited by the affluent white females who live outside the southwest neighborhoods of Springfield, not the locally-based young 'black' 'ethnic' women such as Maureen and Irene.

The predominance of white females using the 'elite' dance classes and programs suggests that the discourses of 'race', class, and gender which have currency in these spaces work to provide the young women with acceptable 'movement vocabularies' (Foster, 1998, p.11) aligned with the white middle class. While Maureen never explicitly mentions the school-based dance classes or performance groups in her interviews, the way she extensively describes the sheer enjoyment of moving her body in the club space suggests that she would only be able to use 'informal' dance spaces – Maureen's desire to attain bodily pleasure through 'wild' and 'freaky' bodily movements would likely be construed as 'distasteful' and 'out of control' in the confines of the disciplinary high school dance spaces. It is difficult to imagine that Maureen's bodily performances would fit within the confines of the high school dance aesthetic, which easily aligns itself with the

white middle class development of restrained bodies, posturing, and movement (Bourdieu, 1984).

Because they are allied with middle class white modalities of the body which emphasize controlled and measured deportment, the 'elite' high school dance spaces would not permit Maureen to 'switch it around' and (re)enact hip hop, African, and salsa dance styles in a class or recital. While the 'In Motion Dance Group' performs a wide range of dance styles such as tap, ballet, modern, and African, I have demonstrated that ballet is still fundamental to the ways these dances are performed and comes to take on a disciplinary and normalizing function in relation to the body. Maureen would not be able to dance in a 'dramatic', 'silly', 'wild', and 'freaky' way in these institutional environments, performing erotic behaviors such as pulling a guy's hair, dropping to the ground, and crawling. These acts would contravene the established mores and aesthetic boundaries of the Thompson dance spaces. For instance, Thomas (2003) argues that while ballet dancing involves partners touching each other in ways that have sexual connotations, audiences are supposed to interpret whether this touching is expressive or technical in relation to the particular choreographic context. In ballet performances emphasis is placed on controlling the body (and thus sexuality) and 'the placement of touch is highly codified' (Thomas, 2003, p.100).

While contemporary urban 'club' culture is often linked with the attainment of personal pleasures, Maureen's dancing would be considered hyper-sexual and thus deviant in the confines of the predominantly white affluent culture that exists in the majority of the afternoon classes and performance groups. Desmond (1991) argues that in Western societies, the racialized female 'Other' has been categorized as being 'primitive, childlike, and backward; it is eccentric, irrational, chaotic, and mysterious; it is sensual, sexual, fecund, and despotic. Most important, the Orient is deemed incapable of speaking for itself' (p. 40). While Desmond here refers to the 'Orient' in this deconstruction of the 'West/East' binary, it is applicable to the construction of the 'black' female 'Other'. In particular, the 'black' female 'Other' body has been signified by 'othering'

discourses as ‘having an animal-like sexuality’ (Thomas, 1996, p.510) that is simultaneously fascinating and undesirable⁵⁵ whilst the white European female body is linked with ‘higher sexual mores and beauty’ (p.510). In her reading of Savigliana’s (1995) study of the eroticization and exoticizing of the tango in Western countries, Thomas (2003) argues that the colonizing discourse has been deployed in order to co-opt and transform dances such as the rumbia, tango, and samba, whose overt displays of female sexual passion have become ‘smoothed out by the “good taste” of (civilized) western culture⁵⁶’ (p.154). Maureen’s dance performances in the white dance spaces would offend Western ‘standards of sexual propriety’ (Desmond, 1992, p.40) and her highly-erotic bodily practices would thus be seen as existing outside acceptable norms of (white) beauty and sexual taste. Yet I argue that it is precisely this deployment of a hyperbolic and parodic hyper-sexual bodily performance that would work to rupture her positioning as the ‘mute colonized female’ (Desmond, 1991, p.41) and re-inscribe her denigrated subjectivity as the hyper-sexual ‘black’ female ‘Other’. Butler (1999) argues that (re)enacted performances such as cross-dressing and drag work to mock and thus disrupt the notion of a true gender identity that is grounded in sex difference. She comments that:

it [drag and cross-dressing] gives us a clue to the way in which the relationship between primary identification – that is, the original meanings accorded to gender – and the subsequent gender experience might be reframed. The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed... *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency.* Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency

⁵⁵ Gilman (1986, as quoted in Desmond, 1991, p.42) comments that Freud ‘ties the image of female sexuality to the image of the colonial black and to the perceived relationship between the female’s ascribed sexuality and the Other’s exoticism and pathology.’

⁵⁶ Similarly, I contend that the ways hip hop and African dance classes have been cut from the Thompson dance curriculum and co-opted by the ballet and modern influenced advanced level courses and performance groups reflects an attempt by the dominant white middle class dance culture to ‘civilize’ and ‘smooth out’ these dance forms.

in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary. (Butler, 1999, p. 175, author's emphasis)

In a similar sense then, Maureen's dancing plays upon the seemingly 'natural' and 'necessary' meanings that are (re)produced by the causal linkage between biological differences and 'race' and gender. Maureen's bodily practices demonstrate the contingency of the discursive constitution of the 'hyper-sexual' and 'uncivilized' 'black' female 'Other' which also suggests that she can 'be' someone else. At the same time, Maureen's 'freaky' and 'wild' 'hybrid' dancing in the high school spaces would affirm the existence of multiple modalities of the body. This proliferation of bodies would serve to undermine the hegemonic ideals and boundaries of the body which currently dominate these institutionalized spaces.

However, I also contend that Butler's claim that the 'pleasure' of the parodic or hyperbolic performance is linked to the intentional disruption of gender and sex norms serves to reduce bodily pleasure to a political act. I concur with Sullivan (1997, 1999), who argues that certain pleasures of the body associated with tattooing, sadomasochism, piercing, and scarification must not only be read as intentionally political acts, but instead illustrates that multiple pleasures of the material body, including those derived unintentionally, come to proliferate through power relations. Butler's concept of 'discursive agency' (1997) involves a political subject who acts with intentionality in order to produce her/him self in a specific way, even as the outcomes of their acts are never guaranteed. Yet, following Sullivan (1999), I argue that conceptualizing pleasure as the outcome of deliberated upon work that the self employs when she/he wishes serves to create a notion of pleasure as a strictly political practice. The Butlerian perspective lends itself to the categorization of pleasure 'as sadomasochistic, heterosexual, parental, intellectual' (Sullivan, 1999, p.254) which serves to obscure those 'accidental' or 'unintentional' pleasures of the body and the crucial role that I would argue these bodily pleasures play in resignifying normative discourses. The notion that

pleasure is intentionally employed as a means of discursive resignification reduces it to a normalizing function. Because Maureen's subversive 'hybrid' dance performances are in many ways linked to her material body's desire for pleasure rather than towards making an intentional political statement, she crucially demonstrates the possibilities that subjects can both deliberately and unintentionally (re)enact parodic and hyperbolic political acts that work to proliferate subjectivities and bodies, and in so doing, disrupt normative discursive categories.

This is where I see a distinction between the bodily performances (re)enacted by Maureen and Sasha. While Maureen's comment about 'dancing her behind off' concurs with Sasha's previous politicized statements that she 'put more heart' into her dance performances, I would argue that Sasha is much more self-aware than Maureen that she is deploying a hyperbolic and non-ordinary bodily practice. Also, while both women's bodily performances trouble existing notions of 'race' and gender, Sasha's dancing takes on a much more non-ordinary meaning because it takes place in the context of the elite institutional dance spaces. The subversiveness of Maureen's bodily practices is more delimited because it occurs in the nightclub space, where the (re)citation of her 'hybrid' dancing takes on a much more normative meaning. As Thomas (2003) notes, '(t)he discourses on contemporary clubbing generally generate a picture of a fragmented, unfixed, postmodern world in which new, fluid modes of "sociality" and "figurations" (gender, sexual, 'racial') are at least a possibility, if not an actuality' (p.184). The predominantly 'Latino/a' audience comes to reward Maureen for re-enacting and merging different dance styles in innovative ways, and for the improvisational deftness by which she responds to 'the music, crowd, and context' (Foster, 1998, p.15). In this way, the salsa club is similar to 'informal' break-dancing spaces (see Foster, 1998). Also, the heightened state of empathy that exists between dancers is reminiscent of rave clubbing (see Malbon, 1999). The salsa club audience rewards Maureen for her dancing, involving a range of dance style citations, because it represents 'charisma, cool, funkiness, virtuosity, and audacity' (Foster, 1998, p.15). It is the ability to move the body innovatively,

rather than normatively, that is linked to the acquisition of cultural capital within the salsa club dance space.

In comparison, Sasha's dancing practices are much less accepted by her white female peers in the elite high school dance spaces. This points to the distinctive discursive frames operating in the institutional and 'informal' dance spaces and the different possibilities for political subversion and social change that each space affords these young 'black' women. As Youdell (2004a) argues, '(A) sole subject may engage in practices of reinscription, and these performatives may, or may not, achieve (be received by another subject as having) a non-ordinary meaning. The discursive frame in which such reinscription is deployed will undoubtedly be crucial to their effect' (p.207). The commentary from Sasha and Maureen illustrates how each dance space provides different discursive frames and possibilities of subversion, and, in so doing, produces different types of resistant bodies and subjectivities.

In Chapter Five I argued that John essentially became invisible in all the park basketball spaces because of his devalued form of embodied capital in the context of the hegemonic 'black' masculine hierarchies. I similarly make the claim here that in relation to the female hierarchies structured around white middle class bodies, Maureen's disavowed embodied capital renders her absent from the advanced institutional high school dance spaces. Through this exclusion, the possibility that Maureen's 'hybrid' style of dancing might subvert and transform the normative meanings associated with the constitution of the racialized 'black' female body is negated. In comparison, despite her alienation within the school dance spaces Sasha's previous technical dance training still affords her the possibility of participating (albeit in limited fashion) in institutional dance programs, from which she is able to call into question the naturalized discourses surrounding the fat 'black' female body. It is very evident that Sasha is (contingently) accepted into the white middle class discursive frame of the high school dance spaces because she has learned particular ways of moving and presenting the body which are afforded by her working-class background, despite

her 'fat black female body' (Shaw, 2005, p.151) which has been encoded as 'sloppy' and incapable. In contrast, Maureen, despite her slimmer and more athletic body, would be excluded from these spaces because she would move her body in ways that would come to represent 'ghetto-ness' and be encoded as the 'hyper-sexual' 'black' female (e.g. the 'fast black' or the 'hootchie'⁵⁷). While Sasha's larger body renders her as 'sloppy', incapable and thus non-threatening, Maureen's awe-inspiring 'freaky' dance performances would be a much more threatening presence to the gendered and racialized norms of the high school dance spaces.

This dissonance between Maureen's dance performances and the elite spaces suggests that the discursive practices within the high school serve to prohibit certain 'racial' and feminine modes of being that are linked to the intensification of pleasure by the body. Maureen is likely to be excluded from the advanced level high school spaces in large part due to her explicit (re)enactment of bodily pleasure, which I have previously argued contravenes the discursive norms of the prevalent white middle class dance culture.

In addition, it is also highly likely that Maureen's culturally 'hybrid' dance performances would not fit within the introductory classes which serve to reify 'black'/white binaries through the operation of 'dividing practices'. As noted by Irene, these spaces have been discursively encoded in ways that (re)produce oppositional modalities of 'blackness' and 'whiteness', which renders the 'ethnic' Haitian females as the 'Other'. Irene was able to constitute her self as a 'hybrid' subject through her bodily practices and speech acts that were deployed in relation these 'black' and white spaces.

This analysis demonstrates that the three 'black' young women described in this chapter are afforded very distinctive accesses to spaces because of their specific gendered, 'racial', 'ethnic', diasporic, and classed backgrounds. Crucially, these

⁵⁷ 'Hootchie' or 'hootchie mama' refers to an African-American female who is supposed to be very promiscuous.

institutional and ‘informal’ dance spaces provide them with very different modalities of the body and, thus, possibilities of who they could become. By (re)enacting a range of bodily performances in their respective dance spaces, these young women are able to affirm a proliferation of bodies and subjectivities that serves to destabilize normalizing categories and re-inscribe their deficit positioning as the ‘black’ female ‘Other’.

SASHA: FLUIDLY MOVING BETWEEN ‘ESSENTIALIST’ AND ‘HYBRID’ SUBJECTIVITIES

To make it more evident that the young ‘black’ women can take up a multiplicity of self-body relations that work to trouble and disrupt dominant significations of ‘race’, class, and gender that are embedded in their dance spaces, I now turn to an analysis of Sasha’s (re)enactment of a ‘hybrid’ subjectivity. Sasha often took up a ‘mixed black’ subject-position that she strongly linked with what she considered to be ‘African-American’ or ‘black’ forms of dance. While I argued previously that Irene constructed her ‘black’ Haitian subject-position by distancing her self from modes of dance such as hip hop that were equated with ‘black’ or African-American culture, Sasha often constituted her self as ‘black’ in order to resist the dominant white middle class body discourses operating in the high school dance spaces.

Yet, what fundamentally distinguishes Sasha from the other young people in the study is how she explicitly deploys a pluralized ‘mixed black’ subjectivity to recoup the notion of the deficit ‘fat’ and ‘black’ female ‘Other’. For example, while she recognizes that she is marginalized in relation to the white middle class modalities of the body that have currency in the afternoon dance spaces, she also takes up a claim around ‘whiteness’ that involves dancing to ‘white music’ and hanging out with her ‘white friends’. Outside of the institutional dance classes, Sasha comments that she sometimes considers herself to be white and is able to ‘fall into’ the ‘typical white culture’. In other instances, Sasha deploys multiple ‘black’ subjectivities in the different classes and performance programs in the high school. She says that she enjoys the freedom of the introductory high school African dance classes, which she finds interesting because they are ‘not the same

for everyone’. However, because of her previous technical training, she finds these classes ‘too disorganized’ and ‘too slow’ and deploys a particular ‘black’ subjectivity that is considered by her peers to be too white. In the afternoon dance classes Sasha enacts a more subversive ‘black’ identity in relation to the hegemonic white middle class culture of dance that serves to privilege the more affluent and ‘slim’ white females. Yet another claim to a ‘hybrid’ ‘black’ subject-position is made when Sasha acknowledges that moving between these different spaces and subjectivities leaves her with an enjoyable feeling of being ‘out of place’.

Taken together, the complex and contradictory subjectivities (re)enacted by Sasha demonstrates the artificiality of ‘racial’ and gendered inscriptions that are culturally encoded in her institutional dance spaces. Furthermore, I go on to provide a more sophisticated analysis of resistance by claiming that the subversiveness of her bodily performances is directly related to the specific discursive frames that exist where these performances are deployed. While the act of assuming a ‘hybrid’ subject-position takes on a politicized meaning and serves to disrupt the wider discursive field, it does not always take on a non-ordinary meaning in each dance space where it is performed.

To begin drawing out the picture of Sasha’s ‘hybrid’ subject-position, I first describe the ways she aligns her self with an essentialist ‘black’ subjectivity through recourse to what she considers to be ‘black’ or African-American forms of dance. This becomes evident in the following quote where Sasha describes her involvement in an annual Kwanzaa dance performance, which is culturally associated with African-American/African history and culture:

From Sasha:

- Matt: Tell me about the Kwanzaa thing that you did, how did that feel? How did you feel there?
- Sasha: Well the Kwanzaa are African dance performers and of course the entire cast was African-American. So not only was it

everyone, you know, we had a common bond, we were all the same ethnicity, but also Kwanzaa is a celebration for African-American people. And the organization that I was doing it with was an organization that represents 'black' people. So just all in all it was like I had one focus and that was dancing; I didn't have to worry about all the other stuff.

Matt: Other stuff like what?

Sasha: I didn't have to worry about fitting in and being better than the other girls or the girls being better than me and I didn't have to worry about what was being said behind my back or if anyone thought that I was good enough to be there. It was just me and my friends dancing and we were dancing the African dance which represents our culture and you know, we got to learn about our history as well. So overall it was just one of the best dancing experiences that I've had in my life.

Sasha often felt that she did not 'fit in' with the institutionalized culture of the high school dance spaces that signify white middle class attitudes and relations to the body. In response to her devalued positioning that is constituted by the injurious speech acts of her white female peers, Sasha comes to associate herself with 'black' African/African-American people, culture, and dancing. Throughout this particular interview Sasha described how she aligned her self with modalities of dance and the body which she felt were rooted in 'black' or 'African-American' culture. According to Sasha, the 'black' or African-American approach to dance simultaneously incorporates 'freedom', 'rhythm', 'the beat' and having 'fun', while de-emphasizing the size, shape, and look of the body in ways that she associates with white culture. In the next few quotes, Sasha discusses how she draws from 'black' and 'African-American' culture to engage with the oppressive white body culture that exists in her institutionalized dance spaces. Here she remarks that in 'African-American culture' one has to be 'fit' and 'healthy', but that doesn't mean having a body that is 'very skinny' or 'so slim' which she comes to associate with whiteness.

From Sasha:

Matt: Do you think that [your attitude towards dancing] is based on 'ethnicity' or culture?

Sasha: I think it does have a lot to do with culture because you don't always see that the African-American culture needs to be slim or skinny, you know; it's not that important. Yeah you have to be fit and healthy but there's not like the desire to be so slim that you ... But like in the predominantly white culture it's like, on TV and in the media you always see the skinny figure because that is who they identify with, they try to be very skinny, like, whoever this role model is.

In the next two quotes Sasha describes how she enjoys dancing in the morning classes because there is less emphasis on the size, shape, and weight of the body and more emphasis on 'freedom' and 'fun stuff':

Matt: And which one is your favorite or do you have a favorite?
Sasha: I love hip hop just because, I just enjoy my freedom. I enjoy taking ballet and the technical courses, learning the terms and all that but there is something about the freedom in hip hop and in African dance like the rhythm and the beat, I love that.

Later in the interview:

Matt: I guess in the dancing spaces like how do you feel about your body when you're dancing based on what you've just told me about your perspectives of culture and things like that.
Sasha: Well when I first started dancing at Thom taking the morning classes, I didn't really care because there were people in the class smaller than me, people in the class bigger than me and like...
Matt: Predominantly African-American.
Sasha: Predominantly African-American. I mean no one really cared about how we looked, like physically we cared about how we looked while we were dancing, you know, just are we doing the moves right, who is shaking more than the other, you know, just fun stuff, not really concerned with how much I had to eat in the morning and how much it's going to make my stomach big.

The previous comments crystallize the notion that a body hierarchy associated with white middle class notions of the body was often circulated by teachers and many of the more affluent white female dancers in the 'elite' dance spaces. In this way, 'slim' and 'skinny' bodies were considered to be more capable and desirable

than ‘fat’ (usually ‘black’) bodies. As argued earlier in this chapter, in response to her devalued body and subject-position, Sasha enacted a form of retribution towards the ‘white girls’ by calling them anorexic and bulimic. She also deploys certain bodily practices such as ‘trying twice as hard’ and putting more ‘heart’ and ‘effort’ into it – these practices take on a non-ordinary meaning in the context of the elite dance spaces. Her highly-politicized stance stands out from many of her ‘black’ peers who struggled over weight issues because they feared being considered incompetent and ‘sloppy’. The way the majority of Sasha’s ‘black’ female peers felt pressure to conform to the normalizing discourses of whiteness parallels the experiences of the ‘black’ female dancers in Desmond’s (1991) study. The ‘black’ dancers in Desmond’s study felt that they were considered to be ‘too big boned’ (p.510) compared to their white European counterparts. As a result, many of the ‘black’ young women in Desmond’s study ‘felt that they were still seen as “naturally” inferior in dance in particular and in the culture in general’ (p.510).

To subvert the encoding of the ‘black’ body as inferior, Sasha came to embrace an essentialist ‘black’ or African-American subjectivity that was linked with the acceptance of a physically larger ‘black’ body and the ‘rhythm’ and ‘freedom’ of movement through African and hip hop dancing. In so doing, Sasha came to refute the dominant ‘tyranny of slenderness’ (Streigel-Moore & Smolak, 1996, p.267) that pervades the institutionalized dance culture at Thompson High School and Western society more widely.

While culturally associating specific dance styles and modalities of the body with ‘black’ or ‘African-American’ culture could be construed as a normalizing gesture that could serve to reinforce notions of the ‘authentic’ ‘black’ female ‘Other’ who does not ‘fit in’ to the white middle class discursive frame of the elite dance spaces, recourse to ‘black’ essentialism also provides Sasha with a space of resistance from which to form a subversive ‘black’ subject-position. From this ‘black’ subject-position she is able to (re)enact insurrectionary speech acts and subversive bodily performances in order to re-inscribe her deficit positioning as

the ‘fat’ and ‘black’ female ‘Other’. I argue that her practices come to take on a non-ordinary meaning that serves to unsettle and reinscribe the constitutive discourses of the dance spaces because it is likely that Sasha is one of only a few women to take up such a highly-politicized stance. The rareness and unintelligibility of her performative acts of ‘blackness’ and ‘femininity’ would render them as highly troubling in the context of the white middle class discursive frame of the high school dance spaces. In contrast, I argue that her deployment of a ‘black’ or African-American subjectivity in the Kwanzaa dance does not serve to destabilize normalizing identity categories and only serves to reinforce notions of a unifying ‘black’ ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and nationalist subject.

It is also critical to understand that Sasha only contingently invests in an essentialist ‘black’ subjectivity. She also described how she was able to take up multiple modes of ‘blackness’, particularly in other social and institutional contexts. In the next quote Sasha comments that she does not always talk ‘black’ or listen to African-American hip hop and is therefore not a typical “black” teenager’:

- Matt: So when would you say that you are ‘black’, like at Thom would you say you are ‘black’?
Sasha: Yeah at Thom.
Matt: Are you thought of as being ‘black’?
Sasha: At Thom that’s kind of hard like racially, yes, everyone knows I’m ‘black’, you know, no one tries to say anything different. But they might say that I act like a white girl or I don’t act like I’m ‘black’ because I don’t always use slang and I don’t always listen to hip hop; you know, I don’t always follow the typical behavior of a ‘black’ teenager.

The quote above further advances the notion that Sasha strategically (re)enacts various ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ subjectivities which subsequently come to take on both ordinary and non-ordinary meanings in relation to the specific discursive frame operating in each social or institutional setting. In the context of the institutionalized high school dance spaces, she deploys an essentialist ‘black’ subjectivity which she considers to be rooted in hip hop and African dance in

order to subvert the dominant white middle class culture of dance. In the predominantly 'black' or African-American spaces of the high school hallways and introductory hip hop classes, she takes up a specific 'black' subjectivity that is not associated with stereotypical modes of 'blackness' (e.g. she does not use 'black' slang and does not always listen to 'black' hip hop). She further demonstrates how she can 'fall into' a 'typical white culture':

... as far as the typical white culture, you know, I can fall into that background, that area, and most of my friends can also do that. I have a lot of white friends but at the same time a lot of 'black' friends; it's just depending on what mood I'm in.

The deployment of these practices in her specific social and dance settings further works to trouble the sedimented discursive frames associated with 'race' which serve to construct unifying notions of 'blackness'. Furthermore, in addition to her essentialist 'black' and pluralized and subtle 'mixed black' subjectivities, Sasha also demonstrates an ability to exist in another 'hybrid' space in relation to the distinct discursive fields operating in the dance classes:

Matt: And how were they [the classes] different like how were the people different there?

Sasha: Well the classes with the majority of Thompson students they seemed to be just more laid back. The teachers didn't really have much control of the class or they just allowed the students to do their own choreography, like if it was a jazz class sometimes the performance tended to be more hip hop because they just wanted the students to do what they felt like doing because some of the times people took the classes just to fulfill a PE credit, rather than trying to actually learn dance. But in the afternoon classes, you know, things were a lot more technical, we learned terms and we didn't always get a lot of freedom when it came to choreographing the dances. And even like the background of the people like in the morning it was more the African-American students from 'Thom' and then in the afternoon it was more of a stronger Caucasian group and only a few 'black' students. It was not completely different but you would feel like you were in a different place depending on the time of the day you came into school.

Sasha later added that because of the differentiated ‘racial’ constituency and distinct dance techniques emphasized in the morning and afternoon class groups, she ‘was kind of left out in one way or another’. In addition to her comment above that she felt like she was ‘in a different place’, I argue that Sasha comes to exist as a ‘hybrid’ subject because she is restricted by what she perceives to be the binary discursive frames operating in the school dance classes (i.e. ‘laid back’ African-American classes in the morning and ‘technical’ and disciplinary white classes in the afternoon). In relation to this racialized bifurcation, Sasha is able to move in and between these spaces by (re)enacting a range of racialized subjectivities. In so doing, Sasha is able to navigate and disrupt the normalizing ‘racial’ discourses that have currency within the institutional dance spaces.

DISCUSSION

SASHA’S STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT OF ESSENTIALIST AND ‘HYBRID’ SUBJECTIVITIES

In relation to the ways she has been ‘othered’ by the teachers and white females in her elite dance spaces, it is as an essentialist ‘black’ or ‘African-American’ subject that Sasha comes to feel empowered. Many of the other young people in my study (particularly young men) also strongly identified themselves as ‘black’ and ‘African-American’ by linking themselves with physical activities such as hip hop and basketball that have been culturally encoded as ‘black’. However, there is a danger which lies in linking essentialist notions of ‘race’ with particular modalities of physical activity and the body. As Nash (2000) argues ‘the resistant assertion of ethnic difference through dance – the “we can dance this dance authentically” – appears as racialized assumption of dancing ability – the “you must be able to dance this authentically” (p.660). As this quote indicates, this recourse to ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ authenticity often serves to constitute a misrepresentative unifying ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity and also reifies inaccurate stereotypes (e.g. all ‘black’ people have rhythm).

In addition, linking particular modes of dance with cultural and ‘racial’ attributes could negate the potential that dancing and the material body might have to

problematize fixed identity categories of gender, 'race', and class and provide individuals with the means to 'be' someone else. Yet, I argue that when Sasha deploys her essentialist 'black' subjectivity through her resistant speech acts and competent and emotive bodily performances within the discursive frame of the elite afternoon dance classes, she is able to trouble her 'wounded' inscription (Youdell, 2004b) as the incapable 'fat' and 'black' female 'Other'. In comparison, I am unconvinced that the deployment of this essentialist 'black' subjectivity in her Kwanzaa dance performance serves to destabilize normalizing categories of gender and 'race', because it is easily assimilated into the dominant discursive norms which emphasize the existence of a unifying 'black'/African-American/African cultural identity. This suggests that performative acts can both be received as non-ordinary and ordinary depending on the context in which these acts are deployed, and come to take on subversive or non-subversive meanings accordingly.

The strategic ways that Sasha comes to exist as a subversive 'hybrid' subject becomes evident when she takes up and deploys another variant of her 'black' subjectivity. Sasha notes that in her predominantly African-American high school and in her introductory level hip hop classes everyone knows that she is 'black', yet they say that she acts like a 'white girl' or doesn't act 'black' enough. This suggests that her 'black' subjectivity is considered inauthentic because she doesn't always listen to hip hop or use 'black' slang. This demonstrates that even as a seemingly static and unifying 'black' subjectivity has currency with many of the young people at Thompson High School (particularly with the male basketball players as I discussed in Chapter Five), this seemingly fixed and oppositional subjectivity can be revealed as contingent and artificial by the performative acts of young people such as Sasha. Her range of linguistic and bodily practices serves to destabilize the fixity of a 'black' identity and provides evidence that 'black' young women, in different contexts, are able to affirm and inhabit both essentialist and multiple 'racial' and 'ethnic' subjectivities.

The ways Sasha takes up pluralized and shifting ‘black’ subjectivities serves to disrupt her seemingly entrenched and deficit positioning as the ‘black’ female ‘Other’. hooks (1994) argues that these types of multiple (re)enactments of ‘race’ and gender serve to challenge ‘imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally in ways that reinforce and sustain white supremacy’ (p.425). Furthermore, Sasha’s ability to strategically reinscribe ‘blackness’ in more favorable ways lies in the way she simultaneously recoups *and* retains her positioning as being a ‘fat’ ‘black’ female. This argument is supported in by Youdell (2004a):

Performative names that ordinarily act to constitute the pathologized, victimized, or denigrated subject cannot simply be discarded. And attempts to silence or erase these names do not interrupt their capacity to constitute particular sorts of subjects; indeed, such attempts may contribute to these constitutions. Instead, a performative politics suggests that these names be retained, redeployed, and reinscribed. (p.207)

This suggests that it is impossible for Sasha to completely do away with her inscription as a denigrated ‘black’ female subject. Yet by retaining and redeploying ‘blackness’ in multiple forms through her performative acts, Sasha is able to reveal the contingency and artificiality of hegemonic ‘racial’ discourse and subsequently reinscribe her deficit positioning.

From my reading of the above excerpts I argue that Sasha *strategically* chooses to take up aspects of what she considers to be white and ‘black’ cultures and identities in complex and fluid ways, as evidenced by the range of practices that she deploys in her various dance spaces. This is much different from Irene, who deliberately rejected what she considered to be white and ‘black’ dance cultures in order to constitute herself as a ‘Haitian’ subject. This also diverges from Maureen, who seems to play with certain ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ subjectivities through her pleasurable bodily performances in Club Salsa, but yet still speaks herself as being a ‘black’ Haitian when asked to describe her identity.

In comparison to the urban impoverished Haitian women Maureen and Irene, I would argue that Sasha's previous technical dance training that is afforded by her more working-class upbringing, as well as her ability to access a white cultural background, crucially affects the ways she comes to enjoy (re)enacting a 'hybrid' subjectivity in the various dance classes. Because her embodied capital provides access to the institutional dance spaces and is more easily converted into cultural capital across the range of the dance classes, Sasha is more easily able to play with various subjectivities in comparison to Irene and Maureen. Taken together, the range of multiple 'black' subjectivities that were taken up and deployed by these young women directly challenges the existence of a unitary 'black' female identity that can be linked to 'authentic' or naturalized 'black culture' and the 'black experience'.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to extricate the complex and contradictory ways that Irene, Sasha, and Maureen were able to contest their devalued subjectivities and come to exist as pluralized 'black' subjects, I drew from Butler's notion of performative reinscription. What is of crucial importance here is that the deployment of subversive linguistic and bodily practices serves to produce non-ordinary meanings depending on the discursive frame in which they take place. Drawing from Butler in her analysis of the ways young women struggle to redefine a devalued 'fat' identity, LeBesco (2004) argues that:

we need some way of discerning which actions are truly disruptive of so-called normalcy, and which in fact help to maintain the status quo. Butler suggests that this requires looking at performances *in context* and asking 'What performance in what context will help to destabilize normalizing identity categories?' (p.4, author's emphasis)

From this position I thus provided a closer reading of the ways the young women deployed their performative acts in relation to their dance spaces in order to constitute their particular 'black' subjectivities.

Another crucial line of inquiry contributing to a more sophisticated understanding of subjective resistance involved demonstrating that not all resignifying practices are necessarily intentional. While young 'black' women such as Sasha are quite self-aware of their capacities to act as political subjects by engaging in the practices of reinscription, I also argue that the pleasures of the material body play a pivotal role in disrupting the discursive norms operating within physical activity spaces. While Butler's concept of performativity suggests the possibilities that subjects can act with discursive agency in order to disrupt the culturally established sex-gender-sexuality constellation, I concur with Shilling (2003) that this notion of gender as a discursive production can also serve to obscure the 'fleshy physicality of our embodied being' (Shilling, 2003, p.181).

To conclude, the young women's involvement in a variety of dance spaces provides a crucial window from which to understand the social and institutional mechanisms by which their subjectivities are constructed and (re)constructed. In the previous discussion around dance, embodiment, and spaces I have demonstrated that the young women 'do' and 'undo' their subjectivities in relation to their discursive positioning in very complex and contradictory ways. The ways in which the young women invested in a plurality of 'racial' and 'ethnic' subjectivities points to the instability and artificiality of fixed and oppositional gender and 'race' categories. The cultural constitution of the 'black' female 'Other' is not a unifying subjectivity, but is instead subject to fracturing and reinscription and serves to produce very contingent and fluid ways of being for the young women in the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

My role – and that is too emphatic a word – is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people – that's the role of an intellectual. (Foucault, 1988b, p.10)

As I articulated in the opening chapter, this thesis emerged out of my realization that popular and academic assumptions around health, sport and physical activity need to be reconsidered because they serve to position young people from so-called 'marginalized' socio-cultural backgrounds as being 'at risk', 'deviant', and in need of 'saving'. My aim throughout this thesis has been to demonstrate that the sets of 'truths' associated with sport, physical activity, and health which have currency in these young people's lives are unstable and artificial, even as they affect young people's practices and sense of self. In so doing, I disrupt traditional understandings of young people and their health and physical activity engagements which only serve to privilege particular 'normative' subjectivities and behaviors.

Based on my interpretation of empirical data, I argue that the young people in my study came to exist as particular physically active and/or healthy subjects by responding to the ways they were positioned as the 'Other' by normalizing discourses. By providing an alternative way of conceptualizing the physically active and healthy subject, I address a lack of critical physical activity, sport, and health research into the lives of young people living in impoverished urban areas. This task required that I deploy poststructural and postcolonial theories of the

subject, the body, social spaces, power, and knowledge, and integrate these theories into an interpretive methodological strategy that integrated several qualitative methods such as interviewing, spatial mapping, and observations.

This thesis argues that the dominant discourses surrounding health, sport, and physical activity intersect with broader cultural discourses of ‘race’, gender, and class, and come to affect the selves and bodies of young people in very specific ways. By providing descriptive qualitative accounts of a group of young people from their perspectives, I argue here that the young people negotiated these discourses in direct relation to their specific cultural backgrounds. In addition, I make the claim that the discourses which were made available to the young people to construct their subjectivities were specifically (re)produced in relation to their urban impoverished neighborhoods. To investigate the relations of power and ‘truth’ operating in their neighborhoods I deployed a more spatially-focused analysis drawing from notions of cultural geography and ‘social space’ (Lefevre, 1991).

By investigating the context, meaning, and construction of health and physical activity in the lives of a group of young people, this thesis challenges conventional ways of researching young people which focus on their problematic engagements with health and physical activity. This stance is informed by the analyses conducted in the previous three chapters, which described how the young people engaged with available ‘truths’ surrounding health and physical activity, and took up particular practices in order to constitute their complex and contradictory subjectivities. By taking into account the continuous ways in which the young people came to take up particular subjectivities and modalities of the body, this thesis adds to critical understandings of the place and meaning of health and physical activity in young people’s lives.

MY RESEARCH QUESTIONS: INVESTIGATING THE PLACE AND MEANING OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

In relation to my own experiences in sport and physical activity and my realization that the ways young people's lives had been influenced and studied by community groups, academic researchers, and institutions were problematic, several fundamental questions became compelling and led me to conduct this study. These questions generally focused upon the powerful ways in which a group of young people had been positioned by 'normative' discourses of health, sport, and physical activity. In order to provide a departure point from which to conduct this study, a central question of this thesis was devised:

What is the place and meaning of sport, physical activity, and health in the lives of a group of young people from diverse 'racial', 'ethnic', classed, and gendered backgrounds living in an urban neighborhood?

Investigating this central research question prompted me to also implement a subset of three inter-related questions. Interweaving these questions into the three discussion chapters added to the sophistication of my analysis:

- 1) How do these young people from diverse 'racial', 'ethnic', classed, and gendered backgrounds engage with prevailing 'health' discourses in order to construct their subjectivities and relate to their bodies?
- 2) How do the young people engage with spatial processes that are linked with dominant notions of the racialized urban 'Other' in order to become discursively constituted subjects?
- 3) Through what discursive processes do the young people come to exist in particular locations of power and also create and maintain social hierarchies in their physical activity spaces?

These primary research questions provided departure points from which to investigate the complexities of the young people's health, sport, and physical

activity engagements and subjectivities. To consider these questions I turned to several theoretical perspectives offered in poststructural and postcolonial scholarship. In using these theoretical approaches I was able to provide several complex analyses regarding the processes by which the young people appropriated and deployed discursive resources in order to become healthy and physically active subjects. This thesis argues that health, sport, and physical activity discourses operating in a variety of institutional, cultural and neighborhood contexts shaped the young people's lives in profound ways. I have demonstrated that the young people actively appropriated and deployed these discourses in order to take up multiple and complex self-body relations in ways that have not been acknowledged by contemporary health and physical activity studies.

MY KEY THESIS ARGUMENTS

In coming to these understandings, I have developed several interwoven arguments that emerged out of the study conducted for this thesis. My first argument is that poststructural and postcolonial theories provide a useful resource to analyze the ways subjects and subjectivities are constructed in and by cultural practices. My second argument is that poststructural and postcolonial theories inform an interpretive research methodology that challenges and disrupts traditional ways of conducting ethnographic research. My third argument is that health discourses equating health with particular practices of eating and exercise and modalities of the body are a powerful resource by which young people come to construct their subjectivities. In my fourth argument I propose that health discourses also sometimes provide young people with diverse and contradictory, and even resistant, ways of engaging with 'normalizing' health practices. This argument suggests that there is no one way that young people come to idealize themselves and work on themselves as healthy subjects. From this point I turn to my analysis of physical activity and sport spaces to advance the fifth argument that neo-liberal practices associated with individual empowerment through sport can have great currency in urban sport and physical activity spaces. By turning to a more specific spatial analysis centered upon the body, I then assert in my sixth argument that institutional physical activity spaces can (re)produce gendered and

racialized hierarchies of the body. In the seventh argument I explore the interconnectedness of both institutional and ‘informal’ spaces and the role that these spaces play in essentialist and ‘hybrid’ subjectivity formation. Given that all of these arguments build the case that young people can take up shifting and contradictory subjectivities by negotiating a matrix of discourses, I make a strong argument for researchers to provide more critical analyses that engage with the complex relations that intertwine to construct healthy and physically active subjectivities.

ARGUMENT ONE:

POSTSTRUCTURAL AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES PROVIDE A USEFUL RESOURCE TO ANALYZE THE WAYS SUBJECTS AND SUBJECTIVITIES ARE CONSTRUCTED IN AND BY CULTURAL PRACTICES

Throughout this thesis I have maintained that poststructural and postcolonial theories inform an interpretive mode of inquiry that can help overturn the ways young people’s lives are overdetermined and overgeneralized by adult researchers. I have continually argued against the notion that young people are a homogenous group with similar desires, needs, and characteristics who are confronted with a similar task of constructing a life. My intention was to avoid positioning the young people in my study in narrow ways that would foreclose on the possibilities of understanding the complexity of their lives. This meant drawing upon theoretical understandings of the subject/subjectivities, power/knowledge relations, and discourse(s) in order to be attuned to the contradictions and fluidity of the young people’s existences.

By taking up a poststructuralist perspective as described by Wright (2006), this thesis provides an understanding of ‘truth’ and subjectivity to be constructed and unstable rather than as fixed and essentialist. Thus, from this position, I investigated the power relations that work to determine how certain meanings around health, sport, and physical activity come to have precedence in the lives of young people living in an urban impoverished location. Following Wright (2006), this perspective was used to ‘make visible the ways in which power and

knowledge operate to privilege certain practices and forms of subjectivity and to examine their effects on the lives of individuals and groups' (p.3). Postcolonial theories were used to more specifically engage with the practices of Western cultural hegemony. A crucial mode of analysis involved investigating the discursive resources by which the young people in my study came to understand themselves as the racialized urban 'Other'. While there are discrepancies and tensions that exist when deploying these theories together, I argue that these theoretical traditions provided the means to investigate the discursive processes by which the young people came to constitute themselves as physically active and healthy subjects.

For instance, in my analysis of health in Chapter Four I argued that the young men and women often easily and unproblematically linked health with 'healthism' (Crawford, 1980) imperatives, which pointed to the power of regulatory and productive discourses. Similarly, in my spatial analyses in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, I argued that sport and physical activity is often deployed in Western societies as a means to improve individuals' lives and also to 'empower' them to be moral and productive citizens. I contend that both institutional and 'informal' physical activity and sport spaces served to construct social hierarchies which were based around notions of the 'racialized' or 'gendered' body. Based on my analysis of the cultures of basketball and dance, I also argue that the processes by which the young people came to exist as subjects was directly contoured by their complex engagements with the discursive resources made available to them in their urban physical activity and sport spaces.

Yet, I have also moved away from an understanding of the subject as produced merely by discourse, towards a viewpoint that subjects constitute themselves in discourse through their desires and self-forming practices. The concept of 'technologies of the self' was particularly useful to investigate how health, sport, and physical activity discourses intersect with broader cultural discourses of 'race', gender, and class and operate in specific neighborhood spaces to construct different kinds of subjectivities and relations to the body. This exploration of self-

forming practices was complemented by the deployment of postcolonial cultural ‘hybridity’ and ‘diaspora’ theories of the self which work to disrupt ‘racial’ binaries such as ‘black’/white and East/West.

For instance, in Chapter Four my contention was that the young women took up specific self-body relations that were indicative of their pluralized ways of being healthy in relation to their unique gendered and ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ backgrounds. For instance, the ‘black’ Haitian and African-American women often linked health with the attainment of large and/or physically strong bodies, which contradicts prevailing Western discourses of health and femininity which emphasize the achievement of a ‘thin’ body. As a result, they were more inclined to invest themselves in practices such as eating pleasurable foods and exercising in more moderate or enjoyable ways. This suggests that subjects have the capacity to actively negotiate their own subjectivities, in sometimes resistant or non-conformist ways. Similarly, in Chapter Six I argued that the young women invested themselves into particular practices of the self in order to move their bodies in more pleasurable ways or to negotiate their positioning in relation to the oppressive discourses around them. This often involved fluidly taking up both essentialist and ‘hybrid’ subject positions.

Because the concept of an ‘ethical’ critique is highly polysemous, the ‘ethical’ relationship of the self working on the self warrants further consideration. For example, as I look back over my thesis, it was some of the young women who most exemplified a critical engagement with the self and the discursive fields around them. While I argued that some of these African-American and ‘ethnic’ young women took up practices of the self that approached an ethical relationship characterized by Foucault (1986, 1997a, 1997b) as the ‘care of the self’, it was Sasha, in particular, who was most self-aware and deliberately took up certain practices to transform her self into an ethical subject. In so doing, Sasha took up a distinctive relationship to the self that involved fluidly moving between ‘hybrid’ subject positions in order to survive her positioning as the racialized ‘black’ female ‘other’ by white middle class discourses of the body and health. Through

her ethical relationship to her self, she demonstrates that young people have the capacity 'to problematize who we are' in order to 'think of who we might become' (St. Pierre, 2004, p.346).

Yet, the example of Sasha presents both the possibilities and the complexities of problematizing how individuals come to take up proliferating and disruptive subjectivities. I follow cultural studies scholars such as Nikki Sullivan (2001) in suggesting that Foucault's exploration of self-formation practices in his later works (1986, 1990; 1997a, 1997b) conceptualizes 'the practice of pleasures as a strategic practice of self-(trans)formation' (Sullivan, 2001, p.49). This understanding of the 'strategic' practices of pleasure by which subjects come to invest in discursive subject-positions does not engage with the unintentional or corporeal pleasures that effect how young people come to invest in particular self-forming practices. From this stance, I argue that the idea that individuals deliberately take up (pleasurable) practices which function 'in accordance with the dominant ethos with which one identifies, and which reinforces one's sense of self' (Sullivan, 2001, p.70) is only one way of conceptualizing the ways subjects come to take up 'mobile subjectivities' (Rail, 1998, p. xv) which disrupt dominant discourses. For instance, in Chapters Four and Six I argued that Maureen's desire for bodily pleasure often provided a psychic space from which she (re)enacted a culturally 'hybrid' subject-position. This analysis was made through recourse to Butler's (1990, 1997, 1999) concept of 'performativity' to describe the ways Maureen was able to recoup her subjectivity by (re)enacting erotic dance performances which parodied the 'hyper-sexual' 'black' female 'Other'.

Poststructural and postcolonial theories of the subject and subjectivity are attuned to the myriad ways that subjects are constituted in relation to 'normative' discourses, and the processes by which they come to disrupt and resignify their positioning as the racialized urban 'Other'. By drawing from these theories, I am able to bring forth a sense of young people's agentic capacity to govern their own selves, bodies, and lives, in the face of overwhelmingly prescriptive and reductionist physical activity, sport, and health discourses.

ARGUMENT TWO:

POSTSTRUCTURAL AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES CHALLENGE AND DISRUPT TRADITIONAL WAYS OF CONDUCTING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Poststructural and postcolonial theories of the subject/subjectivities, discourse(s), and power/knowledge relations were used to underpin and inform the interpretive methodology of this thesis. Drawing from these theoretical frameworks, the methodology was designed to generate multiple and contradictory narratives of the young people's lives.

While I drew upon traditional ethnographic methods such as interviewing and observations, I argue that my interpretive methodology disrupts traditional ways of doing social research which often privilege the position of the 'objective' researcher and work to homogenize and misrepresent the lives of the 'Other' in the search for generalizable 'truths'. For instance, in Chapter Three I specifically outlined that drawing from the interpretive research paradigm required that I explore how my own subjectivity was implicated in the generation of data. I have illustrated how my autobiographical background and decision to live in close proximity to the research participants influenced how the young people came to understand, and, ultimately, represent themselves in the research interactions. This forced me to closely examine how these relations shaped each interview. I had to constantly evaluate how the power relations (re)produced in the interactions between me and the participants affect the data that was generated and subsequently analyzed.

Following researchers such as Scheurich (1997) and Gunaratnam (2003), I considered the research interactions as being comprised of shifting power relationships. As such, these interactions did not provide 'true' or 'accurate' representations of the young people. The types of 'truths' and the ways of speaking and acting adopted by the young people and myself were contingent on the interview context and the power relations played out in the interviews. From this perspective, the researcher/participant relationship is not 'objective' but rather

is shifting and fluid and constitutive of multiple and shifting subjectivities. Both postcolonial and poststructural theories shaped my interpretive methodological strategy in relation to the ways data was generated and interpreted. Yet, I acknowledge that there is a space between my theoretical suppositions and the lived experiences of the young people. My decision to underpin the interpretive inquiry with these ‘post’ theoretical positions was not intended (nor would it ever be able to) to find an objective ‘truth’ in a positivist sense. From this position, my analysis was designed to account for the unstable ‘truths’ contained in the interview texts in relation to my own theoretical inclinations – generated data was used to tell multiple stories about the young people’s lives, rather than unifying narratives based on ‘objective’ ‘facts’.

Following Harwood (2000), the methodological strategy that was used to conduct the study in this thesis emphasized flexibility in both the data generation and analysis phases. In particular, while interviewing was the primary method by which data was generated, I also tried to administer several qualitative methods such as observations, journal writing, photography/videotaping, and spatial mapping. While some of these methods proved cumbersome and took away from the aims of the research thesis, the use of spatial mapping was particularly useful to understand the young people’s engagements with health and physical activity discourses in specific urban contexts.

To further illustrate the flexible and subjective process of conducting interpretive research, I provide an example of how I made particular decisions in the research process in order to provide rich descriptions of the young people’s ‘locally embedded experience’ (Nayak, 2003, p.29) as constituted by social relations operating in particular urban spaces. As described in Chapter Three, during the interviews I asked the young people to ‘walk’ me through their daily lives in order to understand how they used their neighborhood spaces. To assist this process of recreating their physical activity movements I brought in a photocopied map of the southwest neighborhoods of Springfield. The young people were asked to describe which places were of most importance to them – they often listed their

residence(s), eating places, social ‘hangouts’, schools, and physical activity spaces such as parks, streets, and gyms. As such, my handwritten or typed spatial notes and the recorded interview texts that were generated came to describe the young people’s daily movements in the summer and autumn/winter seasons, and were used to discern the social practices and patterns associated with the young people’s use of their neighborhood spaces.

To help interpret and subsequently represent these geographic ‘texts’ in conference presentations and in this thesis, I spent several months researching quantitative geographic mapping techniques and hired a research assistant to help import hundreds of data points (the addresses of all neighborhood spaces used by the participants) and data from the 2000 United States census (‘racial’ and socio-economic demographics) into GIS (Geographic Information Systems)-supported computers. In the end I generated several multi-dimensional maps and models of the young people’s use of their neighborhoods. However, I decided against using these sophisticated representations of data that were developed through quantitative technology because I felt that their use in this thesis would involve an extensive deployment of scientific and instrumentalist discourses, whose use in the fields of sport, physical activity, and health studies I seek to trouble. Furthermore, I strongly believed that the models mis-represented the ways in which the young people used their neighborhood spaces. For instance, in order to trace the pathways used by the young people I had to ‘know’ all the addresses of their neighborhood spaces. Yet, many times the participants could not recall exactly where their friends lived or how exactly they got there. Finally, GIS technology (without the use of invasive GPS monitoring devices) is unable to capture the ways individuals move in a non-linear fashion. As such, I argued that maps which only depict young people’s movements ‘as the crow flies’ failed to represent their complex and even random daily movements in their neighborhoods. For these reasons I decided against using the GIS maps to analyze and represent the lives of the participants.

This example demonstrates how I made several choices that came to impact upon the interpretation and representation of generated data. In alignment with poststructural and postcolonial theories which emphasize the proliferation and instability of ‘truths’ and subjectivities in the research process, I employed an interpretive approach to research that required me to engage with and make subjective decisions around several key methodological issues.

ARGUMENT THREE:

MORAL JUDGMENTS THAT ARE MADE ABOUT HEALTH THROUGH A CYCLICAL ASSOCIATION OF APPEARANCE, ATTITUDE, AND BEHAVIOR ARE PROBLEMATIC

My third argument is made in relation to the ways the young people in my study came to understand their selves and bodies as being ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’ in relation to prevailing discourses which link health to particular eating and exercise practices. As such, this examination into the meanings and practices associated with the attainment of health provided a departure point to examine how cultural discourses work to constitute particular subjectivities. By also taking up the stance that power is productive as well as restrictive, I argued that Foucault’s (1997a) analytics of the ‘technologies of the self’ was useful in understanding how the young people came to engage in psychic practices associated with regulating and maintaining their bodies in order to become ‘healthy’ subjects. While health analyses involving this theoretical perspective are rare (see Leahy & Harrison, 2004; O’Flynn, 2004; and Wright et al., 2006), this approach provided me with an entry point from which to investigate the complexities of the young people’s ‘healthy’ practices, selves, and bodies.

From this perspective I was able to examine the health discourses that have currency in Western societies and to think about how the young people were involved in the take up of these discourses. However, it was bewildering to me that the young people initially articulated responses about health that were very similar in nature. Through the interrogation of the interview texts, it became clear that the overwhelming majority of the young men and young women articulated that ‘healthiness’ was the result of eating and exercising properly.

This belief that health was achieved through adhering to specified eating and exercise practices became even more evident when questions around health were framed in the negative, as in ‘What does it mean to be *unhealthy*?’ I argue that assumptions around what it means to be ‘unhealthy’ indicates the power and pervasiveness of prohibitory health prevention and promotion discourses, which seek to convince the young people to avoid ‘risky’ lifestyle practices. This was also made clear because there was no significant variation across the range of the cohort in terms of what they considered to be ‘unhealthy’ – ‘ethnicity’, physical activity background, or gender of the respondent did not seem to be a factor. I argue that the consistent referral to the image of the ‘unhealthy’ couch potato – sedentary, unmotivated, and eating junk food all the time – provides evidence of this Western concern with a burgeoning overweight population. As noted by poststructural health and physical activity scholars such as Evans (2003), Evans et al. (2004), Kirk & Colquhoun (1989), and Wright & Burrows (2004), this type of health ‘talk’ is indicative of the popular and problematic assumption that a person’s adherence to health practices (e.g. eating and exercising ‘correctly’) can be ‘read’ off of a person’s body. Subsequently, exercising and eating practices were imbued by the young people with a moral valuation whereby a person’s body weight, size, and shape came to reflect their health status.

From this perspective, I argued that when initially prompted to discuss ‘what it means to be a healthy person’, the young people uncritically judged particular eating and exercise practices as being ‘bad’ or ‘good’ and subsequently came to equate ‘fatness’ as evidence of neglect, irresponsibility and, ultimately, moral laxity. In this way, people who were positioned by the young people as being ‘fat’ or ‘couch potatoes’ elicited ‘moral reproof’ (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989, p.419) and were considered to be ‘shameful’ (Evans, 2003, p.96). This analysis demonstrated the power of the discourse which equates ‘health’ with particular practices of eating and exercise and that a person’s adherence to such practices can be ‘read’ off the body.

The participants' understanding of what it meant to be 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' paralleled descriptions offered by the young people in a large-scale New Zealand study described by Burrows and Wright (2004) and Wright et al. (2006). These types of descriptions were also similar to those found in Wright et al.'s (2006) longitudinal study of 39 young men and 45 young women in several Australian high schools. In these mostly Anglo-centric studies, health was also linked with specified practices of eating and dieting. The responses from the young people in my study indicates how they unproblematically constituted themselves as either healthy or unhealthy in direct relation to white middle-class values, practices, and identities associated with health. The young people's responses also suggest the powerful ways in which dominant health discourses work through disciplinary power (Foucault, 1979) to constrain and delimit the possible bodily practices and subjectivities of the young people.

I argue that the ways the young people equated exercise and eating practices with health requires vigorous problematization because the moral sanctions (re)enacted around constructing a 'thin' healthy body often have serious and problematic consequences. Taking up these practices often leads to inward feelings of guilt in those who are morally stigmatized because they are seemingly unable to produce the (often complex and confusing) prescribed behaviors, imperatives, and appearances idealized in health discourses. For example, it was evident in Chapter Four that the young people often reprimanded themselves and others for enjoying such privileges as candy bars, greasy foods, and soda pop because eating these foods was supposedly indicative of 'laziness' and moral laxity. It also became evident through some of the young women's talk that their peers often felt inadequate because they are unable (or unwilling) to participate in physically demanding exercise regimens and took up harmful dieting practices, to avoid being stigmatized as 'fat'. Anorexia, bulimia, and over-exercising were mentioned as extreme, yet common, outcomes of this personalized guilt, particularly for young women.

The ease with which the young people (re)produced these health discourses illustrates that ‘young people “know” the relationships between diet, exercise, and health as they are promoted in public health discourse’ (Wright et al., 2006, p.27). I argue that this phenomenon is problematic because it serves to reify the popular belief that there are universal ways of being healthy that must be adhered to by all young people, and can be ‘read’ off the body. While I found this assumption troubling and simplistic, when I turned to the texts from the middle of the first interviews and through the second interviews I found substantial evidence that health knowledge and practices were taken up very differently by the young men and women, often in relation to their ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and diasporic backgrounds. This led me into my next argument that traditional health and physical activity studies fail to engage with the complex ways young people take up health discourses in very distinct and often contradictory ways.

ARGUMENT FOUR:

HEALTH DISCOURSES ARE A PERVASIVE RESOURCE BY WHICH YOUNG WOMEN CONSTRUCT DIVERSE AND CONTRADICTIONARY SUBJECTIVITIES

My next argument is based on the notion that young people appropriate and contest health discourses in order to constitute themselves as physically active and ‘healthy’ subjects in very complex and contradictory ways. While the young people in my study were easily able to (re)produce health information in the opening of the interviews, often in response to simple and straightforward questions such as ‘What does it mean to be healthy?’, I argue here that some of the young people (mostly the young women) from ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and diasporic backgrounds, in relation to their unique biographies and current circumstances (Wright et al., 2006), negotiated health discourses to take up diverse subject-positions. After a more thorough examination of the interview texts it became clear that Foucault’s concept of ‘technologies of the self’ would be useful to understand how the young people drew upon, rejected, and subverted particular health discourses in different ways. This theoretical concept provided me with a way of avoiding a discourse deterministic position whereby the young people would be constructed as passive ‘dupes’ who unproblematically accepted the

health information made available to them on a regular basis. Following a Foucauldian line of inquiry that was also influenced by postcolonial understandings of ‘essentialist’, ‘diasporic’, and ‘hybrid’ subjectivities, I argued that the young people drew from their gendered, classed, and cultural backgrounds in order to align themselves with and against particular notions of health and body stereotypes.

Specifically, I argued that the young people in my study took up and contested dominant healthy eating, exercise, and bodily practices in very diverse and complex ways from each other, and even in comparison to individuals found in other research with primarily white participants. Because of the prevalence of neo-liberal health and sport discourses operating in this inner-city location, I argued that the ways in which these young people came to exist as healthy subjects was also directly linked to their gendered engagements with institutional sport. Becoming healthy was directly linked with the optimization of sport performance. Out of this gendered analysis I argue that the young men were motivated to achieve a ‘healthy’ self that was linked with the achievement of a ‘strong’ body in order to become better sport competitors. I found that the young ‘black’ men articulated the most allegiance to prescribed eating and exercise practices associated with being healthy. As also mentioned in Chapter Five, the practices associated with creating and maintaining this athletic body was linked to the maintenance of hegemonic ‘black’ masculine subjectivities associated with sport and physical activity prowess. However, I argue that this understanding of health provides them with a narrow range from which to engage with their bodies and selves, and to interact with others. As I have maintained in this thesis, the fragility of this ‘black’ masculine subjectivity that is linked with a ‘healthy’ and sporting body is often exposed by injury, age, and statistics which show that extended sport success is often unattainable (Edwards, 1983; hooks, 2004; Kelley, 1997a, 1997b; Messner, 1990a, White & Cones III, 1999).

While the young women in Wright et al.’s study (2006) desired to take up eating and exercise practices to attain a ‘thin’ body, I argue that the young women in my

study desired a 'healthy' body that was 'stronger' or even heavier. This seems to suggest that young women from minority 'ethnic' and 'racial' backgrounds engage with health in different ways than their white counterparts. Yet, there were also differences in the ways the young women in my study took up health practices, often organized around their 'racial', 'ethnic', or immigrant subjectivities. While I argue that both 'black' and Haitian immigrant young women expressed a desire to be physically strong, the Haitian women made this view clear in relation to their abhorrence of 'fat' bodies, which they considered to be 'nasty'. They used this 'abjection' of others' bodies in order to construct themselves as particular diasporic subjects – they did not want to be 'black', which was often negatively associated with (African-American) 'fat black female bodies' (Shaw, 2005, p.151) and also sought to avoid being 'thin' and therefore white. In contrast, I argue that the African-American women were much more tolerant of a larger body and used it as a locus from which to reject healthy practices which they associated with white middle class bodies. Taken together, the ways in which the young women took up specific health practices in relation to 'racial', diasporic, and 'ethnic' discourses to constitute their selves illustrates the complexity of health engagements. This analysis also demonstrates the usefulness of using Foucault's 'technologies of the self' to understand the self-forming practices by which young people come to construct an 'aesthetics of existence' that is linked with the attainment of a healthy ideal. In addition, this thesis makes an important contribution to existing literature by also bringing in postcolonial theories of 'hybridity' into conversation with Foucault's later works around the 'ethical' self. While Foucault highlights the possibility that subjects can take up and deploy specific practices in discourse in order to constitute themselves in multiple and complex ways, postcolonial theories enhanced this perspective by illustrating the complex and subtle ways that the young people came to take up and invest in a proliferation of 'racial' and 'ethnic' subjectivities. Based on this line of inquiry, I contend that researchers must avoid universalizing the experiences and identities of young people in relation to their health engagements. Further research must acknowledge and be informed by the

diversity of young people's socio-cultural and geographic backgrounds and locations, and the sophisticated ways they come to constitute their selves.

While the young women took up health practices in order to constitute their 'racial', diasporic, and 'ethnic' subjectivities in very divergent ways, I also argue from another point of view that both the African-American and Haitian young women exhibited a care of the self that was linked with the pleasures of eating and moving their bodies in physical activity. This contrasted with the young men's much more instrumental ways of conceiving of and moving their bodies. I extensively teased out the ways the young women talked about engaging in pleasurable eating and physical activity practices in order to disrupt the overwhelming amount of epidemiological health studies, which rely upon scientific and medical-based ways of understanding health and the body. Through this conscious deployment I seek to reframe the ways young people's lives are framed within 'normative' and disciplinary discourses that provide them with very narrow ways of engaging with their selves and bodies.

ARGUMENT FIVE:

NEO-LIBERAL PRACTICES LINKED WITH THE SELF-IMPROVEMENT OF 'BLACK' MALES ARE STRATEGICALLY DEPLOYED IN URBAN SPACES AND WORK TO SUSTAIN MASCULINE HIERARCHIES

In my fifth argument I contend that urban physical activity and sport spaces act as sites from which individuals come to appropriate and (re)produce powerful 'empowerment through basketball' discourses which have currency in urban impoverished neighborhoods. Extending my first argument that social practices are constitutive of subjects and subjectivities, I argue here that social practices endemic to specific urban spaces shaped the ways the young men in my study came to understand themselves as the racialized urban 'Other'. By examining the spatial data created through the interviews, I argue that while these neo-liberal urban sport discourses pose as egalitarian and empowering, they often serve to (re)produce gendered, racialized, and class inequalities often manifest as social hierarchies.

Through my analysis of the urban physical activity spaces related to the culture of basketball in Chapter Five, I was able to ascertain that within the park and ‘drop-in’ basketball spaces the young African-American men with exceptional talent were able to exclude and constrain other men and women from participating. These judgments were made in direct relation to powerful ‘empowerment through sport’ discourses operating in their urban neighborhoods. Because these neo-liberal discourses made available through community groups and multi-national corporations such as Nike are explicitly targeted towards young ‘black’ males, the ‘black’ young men in my study often conflated basketball success with the achievement of a hegemonic ‘black’ masculine subject-position. In this way, widely-established societal and popular culture representations served to (re)produce social hierarchies whilst also creating unattainable ‘hoop dreams’. As a result, the young men ‘ran’ the courts in ways that privileged those with an embodied capacity to provide the highest levels of competition. Often, this meant that the young ‘black’ men with the most strength, skill, and power were provided with unrestricted access to neighborhood basketball spaces while most of the other young women and men from southwest Springfield were excluded.

Adding to this analysis of the young men’s exclusionary social practices, I also illustrated how the young men’s sport and physical activity involvements were significantly shaped by cultural phenomena unique to the conditions of postmodernity – where ‘the material has been superseded by the cultural – the physical by the symbolic’ (Silk & Andrews, 2001, p.188). I have demonstrated how the everyday lives of the young men in my study were directly shaped by the rapid movement of information through electronic technologies within and across cultures (Wright, 2004a). This viewpoint was argued from the perspective that Nike has heavily invested in southwest Springfield and influenced the ways the African-American young men took up a range of self-forming practices to pursue a chimerical ‘hoop dream’.

Through this examination of the complex socio-cultural processes through which spaces work to exclude and constrain many of the young people in my study, I

contest the notion that all sport and physical activity spaces are discrete and neutral ‘safe havens’ promoting ‘community harmony’ (Jamieson, 1998, p.346). By demonstrating that the culture of urban basketball *did not* benefit many of the young people, my analysis challenges neo-liberal beliefs surrounding urban sport and physical activity, whereby the choice to participate in sport is considered to be inherently ‘good’ and beneficial to all poor ‘black’ men who would otherwise turn to ‘gangsterism’ (White & Cones III, 1999, p.72).

Having investigated the ways that multi-national corporations and interventionist sport programs work in urban spaces to provide the African-American young men with neo-liberal practices associated with the pursuit of a basketball dream, I extend previous studies which fail to account for the diverse meanings and subjectivities that young men take up through sport and physical activity participation. Because young men from minority ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ backgrounds are positioned so that they can only seemingly transgress their deficit positioning as the ‘racial’ urban ‘Other’ by choosing to invest in basketball, I argue that this understanding of young men and their social conditions only serves to reduce them to ‘basketball dreaming’ typologies, which provides little understanding of the complexities of their lives. I argue that those working in community physical education and sport programs and multi-national corporations with investments in urban sport need to re-evaluate the ways they advance moralistic and ‘normative’ notions of individual empowerment and success. It also behooves those who conduct research into the connections between ‘race’ and sport to move beyond a simplistic participatory model in order to expose the complex ways that spaces, cultural representation, and social policies (re)produce very limiting views of masculinity. This perspective leads me into my next argument where I more explicitly illustrate the ways spatial hierarchies surrounding the embodied subject serve to legitimize particular ‘normative’ values, practices, and subjectivities.

ARGUMENT SIX:

INSTITUTIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SPACES CONTRIBUTE TO GENDERED AND RACIALIZED 'BODY' HIERARCHIES

In my sixth argument, I expand upon the fifth argument that particular discourses and power relations operating in urban spaces serve to delimit and constrain the possible ways young people come to understand their selves and their bodies, and take up sets of social practices accordingly. Turning to the spaces of dance analyzed in Chapter Six, I argue here that the dance spaces worked to (re)produce particular technologies of power that submitted the young women and their bodies to 'normative' ways of being. I argue that the local high school dance classes and performance programs were structured in such ways that the young women from poor and racialized backgrounds were unable to partake in the majority of high school dance offerings. Those that did manage to dance in these spaces often encountered white middle class norms and values that were crucial to the operation of female hierarchies – in these conditions the young women from African-American and 'ethnic' backgrounds were positioned as the 'racial' urban 'Other' and excluded based upon the dominant bodily configurations privileged by the teachers and other dancers.

While I found that organized and 'informal' sport spaces were fundamental to the ways the young men constructed very narrow views of a 'black' masculine subject-position, I suggested in Chapter Six that the young women often turned away from organized sport in favor of dancing. This raised the issue of whether basketball spaces, primarily inhabited by the young men in my study, and the dance spaces, utilized by the young women, provided similar relations of power and ways of constructing the self.

By internalizing popular assumptions and ideals around the culture of basketball, the young men in my study came to form hegemonic masculine hierarchies that privileged particular types of bodies – fast, strong, and skilled. In so doing, the young men themselves organized their basketball spaces in ways that served to anticipate particular subjects, most often talented young 'black' men, while

excluding all others. While my analysis of basketball primarily focused upon ‘drop in’ or ‘informal’ spaces, I turned to a more specific analysis of institutionalized spaces to engage with the young women’s dance experiences. While the basketball spaces served to legitimate the authority of ‘black’ masculine bodies, I argue that by organizing the dance curriculum in ways that set up ballet as the ‘ideal’, the high school played a fundamental role in (re)producing white middle class notions of a ‘thin’ feminine body.

I used the high school as the primary organizing principle from which to frame my spatial analysis because it was used extensively by the ‘local’ ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ young women in my study as well as the more affluent white females who came from outside the southwest neighborhoods of Springfield. My contention was that many of the young women from African-American and ‘ethnic’ backgrounds did not ‘fit in’ with the types of ‘normative’ identity categories and body practices that were offered through the high school and catered towards the ‘out of district’ females. The ‘local’ young women’s exclusion from and discomfort with the high school dance classes and performance programs was made evident through the close examination of the young women’s spatial movements and talk in several interviews.

The commentary from Sasha provided a point of entry from which to begin my analysis because she had participated in several of the high school dance classes and programs. Sasha’s comments consistently illustrated how white middle class discourses surrounding the body became legitimized and privileged certain dance movements and bodies within the high school. Often her statements were made in relation to the most highly-visible and exclusive dance group at the high school, the ‘In Motion Dance Group’, which required extensive classical ballet training for admission. My analysis of Sasha’s interviews suggests that the privileging of ballet served to create particular body hierarchies within the school dance program. Because ballet was set up as the ideal dance form, this created a situation whereby many of the ‘black’ young women had to engage with discourses that privileged the appearances and performances of a ‘thin’ female

body. For instance, Sasha detailed how the ‘white girls’ in the afternoon school dance classes regulated their bodies in relation to ‘skinny’ dancer stereotypes in order to get the preferred roles. Sasha articulated that many of the young ‘black’ women felt pressure to lose weight and ‘try twice as hard’ because their racialized bodies were considered to be too large and therefore incapable of performing in the upper-level dance classes and programs. This viewpoint poignantly illustrated the ways the dance spaces served to legitimate ‘thin’ and white bodies through the centering of a historically Anglo-centric dance form. This led to the creation and maintenance of body hierarchies, whereby larger ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ females had less currency to dance in lead roles and were often derided by their peers.

Moreover, the commentary from Irene and Maureen suggests that the high school dance spaces did not provide a space of comfort for the young women from more impoverished ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ minority backgrounds. In comparison to Sasha, who came from a more working class background, I argue that the types of middle class bodies produced in the dance classes and the systematic ways these classes served to devalue and exclude ‘black’ urban and African styles of dances, Irene and Maureen did not find the high school dance classes salient to their lives. Irene most vociferously expressed her dissatisfaction with the ways the introductory dance classes that took place in the morning were organized. She explained how, because ‘full time’ ‘local’ students had to take introductory classes in pairs, she could not take the African dance that she desired. She did not want to take up another dance class – she felt that the hip hop classes were too ‘black’, and ballet was considered too ‘whitey’ (e.g. too boring and disciplinary). In this way, the structuring of the introductory-level dance classes served to exclude her from participating in them. The comments from Maureen, while not explicitly referring to the high school dance spaces, illustrated that her use of dance spaces was linked to being able to perform in an erotic and pleasurable way that would not be sanctioned by the high school. I argue that because she desired to move her body in ‘freaky’ and ‘wild’ ways she never took high school dance classes and instead preferred to use ‘informal’ spaces such as the salsa club or nightclubs.

I contend that Maureen's and Irene's disavowal of and exclusion from the introductory dance classes had several consequences for their dance futures – because both young women would not have the 'economic capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) to attend more expensive private classes or lessons, their exclusion from or avoidance of the morning dance classes means that they would never be able to move into the afternoon dance classes or performing groups. By turning to Bourdieu's concept of embodied or physical capital, I argue that certain bodily appearances and ways of moving were endowed within the high school dance spaces with a higher form of symbolic value. Because Irene and Maureen would lack the requisite 'capital' that is linked to more affluent white styles of movement, speech, and knowledges required in the upper-level dance classes and programs, they would have no future in the context of dance at Thompson High School. Irene's comments strongly suggest that the structure and curricula of the high school dance program privileges those white middle class young women who have the requisite forms of embodied 'capital' obtained by taking expensive classical ballet lessons.

Taken together, the young women's comments pointed to the ways dance in the context of the high school shut down many desirable ways of moving the body for them. The embodiment of particular Western norms of beauty and femininity was crucially linked to perceived dance capabilities. Performing and displaying the 'right' kind of body provided the young women with access to these institutional dance spaces or the means to get the desired roles. In this way the high school dance spaces served to create female hierarchies. Through my analysis of the interviews it became very clear that these hegemonic discursive hierarchies worked to place the 'black' young women in lower positions of power. This illustrated that the dance spaces worked to sanction only those young women whose subjectivities were aligned with the preferred white middle class body discourses. Because the high school dance spaces only provided Irene and Maureen with the possibilities engaging with their bodies in very narrow and disciplinary ways, these spaces did not work as a source of value for them. While Sasha did invest herself into the high school dance spaces, I argue that she

constantly had to struggle with the ‘cult of thinness’ (Tinning, 1985) set up in the advanced-level afternoon classes.

The crucial argument here is that the embodied subjectivities of the young ‘black’ men described in Chapter Five were afforded greater positions of power in the basketball courts, and therefore they strongly affiliated themselves with the sets of ‘self-empowerment’ ‘truths’ operating in these spaces. There was simply more at stake for them to invest in these discourses because they could accumulate and exchange their forms of physical capital more easily, and be conferred with greater positions of power. In comparison, the description of the high school dance spaces points to the marginalization of the young ‘black’ women because they were unwilling or unable to take up the culturally-valued relations to their bodies in their dance spaces. This suggests that social practices operating in physical activity spaces work differently for young men and women, depending on their distinctive cultural, gendered, and racialized backgrounds.

This line of analysis also illustrates the divergent social practices by which institutional and ‘informal’ physical activity spaces authorize particular bodies and endow certain individuals with differentiated amounts of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984). In the basketball spaces it was the young men who maintained the spatial hierarchies of the body, often by using gender as the primary exclusionary criteria. In contrast, within the institutional dance setting it was the teachers who devised a particular curriculum that privileged particular types of female bodies and led to the creation of female hierarchies of the body. Both analyses, however, illustrate the powerful ways the dance spaces served to exclude the young women in my study based on their existences as ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ female subjects.

On the basis of my spatial analyses, my argument here is that further research is necessary to reveal the complex ways that urban physical activity spaces impact upon young people’s lives by providing them with particular sets of social practices. Furthermore, the distinctive ways in which the young ‘black’ men and

women in my study came to engage with these spaces suggests the need for more research into the lives of ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ young women, who, as argued by Birrell (1989) and Scraton et al. (2005) have often been neglected by sport and physical activity analyses that focus primarily upon ‘black’ men.

ARGUMENT SEVEN:

YOUNG WOMEN USE A RANGE OF INSTITUTIONAL AND ‘INFORMAL’ PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SPACES TO CONSTRUCT THEIR ESSENTIALIST AND ‘HYBRID’ SUBJECTIVITIES

Continuing the argument that spatial-specific social practices are constitutive of subjectivities, in my seventh argument I pose that the young women’s engagements with the body hierarchies in the high school led them to take up both ‘essentialist’ and ‘hybrid’ cultural subjectivities. By describing the shifting and fluid ways in which the young women came to exist as ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ female subjects, I argue that static and fixed categories of ‘race’ and gender are insufficient to capture the complex processes of young people’s self-formation.

The sixth chapter of my thesis provided insights into the social practices by which the young women were able to disrupt unifying and ‘normalizing’ categories of subjectivity. Before the sixth chapter, the argument had been building that the young ‘black’ men often located themselves in very fixed and oppositional identity categories – for instance, in Chapter Four the young men’s talk around health practices indicated that they vigilantly worked to maintain ‘black’ masculine subjectivities tied to sport success. In Chapter Five, these young men created and sustained masculine hierarchies within their ‘drop in’ and park spaces as a strategy to manage their dominant ‘black’ masculinities. Even though their different positions of power indicated that they existed as very different types of subjects, their interview texts suggested that they only conceptualized the subjectivities of themselves and their peers in relation to binaries such as black/white, male/female, rich/poor, and strong/weak.

In contrast, the ‘black’ young women in Chapter Six revealed that through their engagements with dance spaces they deliberately and unintentionally invested

themselves in complex and contradictory subjectivities. While I argue that both basketball and dance spaces had constitutive effects upon the types of subjects that the ‘black’ young men and women could become, the young women were imbued with a greater capacity to ‘stylize’ their ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ subjectivities and take up non-normative self-body relations.

For instance, in relation to the dominant white body culture found in her advanced level dance spaces, Sasha often took up an essentialist ‘black’ subject-position by referring to her desire for a larger ‘African-American’ body that was ‘free’ to move through African and hip hop dancing. This positioning was gestured towards in my second argument, where Sasha revealed her dissatisfaction with dominant Western health imperatives associated with maintaining a ‘thin’ body. Yet, I argued in Chapter Six that what set Sasha apart from the other young people in the study is the way she explicitly took up a culturally ‘hybrid’ subject-position. While she resisted the dominant body discourses which she associated with whiteness in the afternoon dance spaces and took up a resistant ‘black’ subjectivity, she also made recourse to ‘whiteness’ that entailed dancing to ‘white music’ with her ‘white friends’. Sasha commented that she sometimes considered herself to be white and was able to ‘fall into’ the ‘typical white culture’. At the same time, Sasha often deployed a ‘black’ subjectivity that was constituted differently from many of her African-American peers. Because of her previous technical training in more formal dance traditions, she considered the morning hip hop and African dance classes to be ‘too disorganized’ and ‘too slow’ and deployed a ‘black’ subjectivity that was often characterized by the African-American students as white. I argue that yet another ‘hybrid’ subjectivity was claimed when she acknowledged that moving between these different dance spaces and subjectivities left her with an enjoyable feeling of being ‘out of place’.

In comparison, I argue that Irene was much more resistant to the essentialist subjectivities associated with particular forms of dance (‘ballet it’s too whitey’ and hip hop had ‘too many “black” people’). She most explicitly took up practices that suggested her investment in a subject-position that was linked to her

immigrant ‘black’ Haitian background. Most often, she articulated a desire for African dancing that was reminiscent of dancing in her home country.

In contrast, Maureen played around with this immigrant subject-position through her ‘hybrid’ dance performances of salsa, hip hop, cumbia, meringue, and African dance in the ‘Mexican’ salsa club. At the same time, her performances of ‘hybridity’ were sometimes contradicted by her speech – Maureen, like Irene, also verbally identified herself as being Haitian and rejected being associated with ‘black’ African-American culture. I have maintained throughout this thesis that Maureen’s desire to take up a range of dancing and even eating practices was linked with the achievement of bodily pleasure – this often meant that her ‘hybrid’ dance performances were deployed even as she made a claim to an ‘essentialist’ Haitian subject-position. This points to the shifting and fluid ways that Maureen came to invest in various ‘black’ and ‘hybrid’ ‘ethnic’ subjectivities.

I argue that this ability to play with several dance styles and subjectivities was made possible through the club dance space, which provided ‘fluid modes of “sociality”’ and were more accepting of multiple configurations of gender, sexuality, and ‘race’ (Thomas, 2003, p.184). As stated in my previous argument, both Irene and Maureen were only able to take up these divergent subjectivities within the confines of ‘informal’ dance spaces – the high school dance spaces were devalued by these young women because they restricted their desires to move their bodies in more pleasurable ways and to have ‘fun’ in a social atmosphere. As a consequence, the high school provided only a narrow range of possibilities from which the young women could constitute their subjectivities.

Taken together, the diverse and complex ways these young women experienced the dance spaces and identified with and invested in different subjectivities points to how gender is not a unifying experience, but instead intersects with ‘race’ and class to produce different ways of being for women (McNay, 1992). At the same time, this also calls into question the fixed and oppositional categories of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ that are often deployed within the majority of physical activity,

sport, and health studies. My analyses suggest the need for more sophisticated investigations into the practices by which young people construct their ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and gendered subjectivities. This task might be achieved through the implementation of poststructural and postcolonial theories working within the framework of spatial analyses.

CLOSING COMMENTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This thesis illustrates how it is important for those working with young people to understand that they provide young people with particular ways of engaging with the self and the body that serve to ‘other’ and ‘normalize’ them. From this perspective, I argue here that those who work in the pedagogical fields of researching, teaching, and coaching especially need to seek to ‘undo’ the work that has been done in constructing young people’s selves, lives, and bodies in ways that are too linear, mechanistic, and instrumental. Without being too didactic, I suggest that these individuals play a crucial role in illuminating and providing counter-narratives to enable young people to ‘ethically’ critique the operation of normalizing discourses in their lives by reflecting upon and taking up particular social practices.

This stance is strongly supported by Wright (1998), who suggests that researchers work from a position whereby the systems of meaning found in cultures are constituted by the minutiae of social practices that are appropriated and deployed in everyday institutional and ‘informal’ contexts. This means that the sets of meanings which constitute particular cultures related to sport, health, and physical activity can be re-configured through ‘even the smallest change’ (p.19) in social practices. In order for both researchers and young people to become ‘agents of change’ in the realm of sport, physical activity, and health requires reflecting upon how certain social practices which are (re)enacted everyday serve to reinforce or contest the status quo, and to reflect upon the consequences of these practices in relation to the sets of ‘truths’ surrounding ‘race’, gender, and class raised in this thesis. In this way, we can recognize that rather than living pre-determined lives,

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Manager Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Manager:
Location/address:

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like your permission to approach young people using the _____ High School/Community Center to invite them to participate in a research project that I am conducting as part of my research masters at the University of Wollongong in Australia. If possible I would like to post information on my research on the noticeboard and to approach young people directly to talk about my project. As a condition of the ethics requirements at the University, I will need your written consent to do this. Attached is information about the project, written for participants and parents. Also attached is the consent form which you will need to sign if you agree to my recruiting participants in my project through the center.

Yours truly,

Matthew Atencio

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

A Study of Youth's Experiences in Physical Activity and Physical Culture

Physical activity can be a significant (but not always an enjoyable or desired) component in the lives of youth. Young people also must deal with cultural ideals of sports, recreation, and exercise.

I will therefore be researching the multiple experiences of youth in physical activity and physical culture. My research will examine the influences of community programs, school physical education, and informal activities in the lives of young people. Additionally, I will be investigating the movements and attitudes of youth in their various environments. Finally, I am interested in young people's views about sports, recreation, and exercise.

My research will hopefully be informative for young people and their families. Also, it is hoped that the results of my study can influence recreation and funding policies. Results of this study will be reported in the form of an academic paper which is a requirement for a Masters in Education (Research) degree. Some of the results may be presented at conferences and in journal articles.

I, Matthew Atencio, am a Research Masters student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong in Australia. Dr. Jan Wright (jwright@uow.edu.au) will supervise my research.

If you choose to become involved in this project I will ask you to take part in approximately 5 interviews and 4 observations of no longer than 1 hour, intermittently over the course of 10 months. Also, I will ask participants to take photographs and keep journals about their physical activity. I would like to use photographs in reports and presentations of my study. You (or your parents if you are under the age of 18) may choose not to have your photos included in these reports and presentations. All research materials will be provided to you free of cost. Also, all information provided to me will be kept private and confidential and safely locked in a filing cabinet.

If you consent to participate in this research, you will be required to sign the attached form and return it to me in the envelope provided. A copy of the form will be returned to you for your records. If you are under 18 years old, you will also need to have your parent/guardian fill out and return a separate permission form.

You should also understand that if you behave in a violent, risky, or illegal manner, police agencies may be contacted. This will result in your expulsion from this project. Also, if issues of abuse or self-harm arise during the research, I will contact child protective services and police agencies.

Please note that at any time during the research process, you have the right to withdraw from the project without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the University of Wollongong.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please feel free to contact me at (number has been deleted) or my supervisor.

If you have any concerns regarding the way in which this research is or has been carried out, you should contact the complaints officer at the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Office at (610 (2) 4221 4457 or karen_mcrae@uow.edu.au.

Thank you,

Matthew Atencio

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

A Study of Youth's Experiences in Physical Activity and Physical Culture

Matthew Atencio

I have been given information about my participation in *A study of youth's experiences in physical activity and culture* and have discussed the research project with *Matthew Atencio* who is conducting this research as part of a Research Masters degree supervised by *Dr. Jan Wright in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong*.

I understand that, if I consent to participate in this project, I may be asked to:

- participate in interviews relevant to physical activity and culture;
- be observed while I am physically active in a variety of formal and informal settings;
- keep a journal that describes my physical activity movements and attitudes;
- take photographs of my physical activity movements, interactions, and environments; and
- be involved in debriefings and follow-up contacts with the researcher during the course of the research study (approximately 1 year).

I have been advised of potential risks and burdens associated with my participation in this research, which includes an invasion of privacy, and have had an opportunity to ask Matthew Atencio, and any other relevant supervisors, questions I may have about the research and my participation. I also understand that if I behave in a violent, risky, or illegal manner, police agencies may be contacted. This will result in my expulsion from this project. Also, if issues of abuse or self-harm arise during the research, I understand that Matthew Atencio will contact child protective services and police agencies.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and that I am free to refuse to participate and free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will incur no penalties from the researcher.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact *Matthew Atencio* at (number deleted) or *Jan Wright* via email at jwright@uow.edu.au. If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Complaints Officer from the Human Research Ethics Committee

at the University of Wollongong at (61) (2) 4221 4457 or
karen_mcrae@uow.edu.au

By signing below, I am indicating that I consent to participate in the research entitled *a study of youth's experiences in physical activity and physical culture*, conducted by Matthew Atencio as it has been described to me in the information sheet and in discussion with Matthew Atencio. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for thesis and conferences, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed

Date

----/-----/-----

Name (please print)

Appendix D: Photography Authorization Form



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Photography Authorization

I _____ agree for the photos taken during Matthew Atencio's research into the experiences of physical activity and culture in the lives of young people to be reproduced on the following grounds:

1. That I will NOT be referred to in anyway, other than by use of my pseudonym.
2. That any person/s appearing in the photo/s will NOT be identified in any way.
3. That any institution/s (such as schools) appearing in said photo/s will NOT be identified in any way.
4. That I will NOT claim any financial reimbursement for such reproduction.
5. That the publication of the photo will NOT be used in any commercial reproduction.

By agreeing to this I understand that the photos may be shown in an academic journal and other such academic publications or conferences.

Participant's signature:

Date:

Parent's signature
(necessary if participant is under the age of 18)

Date:
