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Sculpting girls' subjectivities: physical culture and the normalised body

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Sculpting Girls' Subjectivities: Physical Culture & the 'Normalised' Body

Jessica Francombe

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Education

July 2011

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DECLARATION OF PUBLICATIONS

Part of the work presented in this thesis has been published in a peer review academic journal.

This publication is:

Francombe, J., 2010. "I cheer, you cheer, we cheer": physical technologies and the normalized body. *Television & New Media*, 11 (5), pp. 350-366.

Other than this:

Declaration of authenticity for doctoral theses

I hereby declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, contains no material previously published or written in any medium by another person, except where appropriate reference has been made.

ABSTRACT

Locating the female body and body movement within a wider cultural politics and in the service of particular political agendas (Andrews 1995; Giroux 2001; Silk and Falcois 2005), within this thesis I seek to explore how the (re)working and (re)constituting of subjectivities is linked to the social context in which we find ourselves. Theorising the ‘data’ collected from critical sport media analysis, collaborative weekly ‘workshops’ and focus groups at Franklin School (a pseudonym for the school where my ‘data gathering’ took place). I interrogate the ways in which a group of twenty young girls both actively (de)constructed the mediated subjectivities they consumed as part of popular (physical) culture and yet continued to vigorously and pleasurably (re)construct and sculpt their own lived subjectivities in accordance with dominant discourses of ‘can-do’ femininity (Harris 2004a). The girls configured a space for themselves to live, work and be female, this was a space that provided middle-upper class, white young girls with the resources—amalgamated technologies of governance—to maintain their subjectivity in ways that legitimised certain bodies and marginalised others. Via the reconfiguration of power, an acceptable and ‘appropriate’ femininity was constructed albeit through a recourse to what they are *not*, a process of ‘otherisation.’

Through the extrapolation of the ways in which the everyday practices of physical culture operate as contested spaces in which unequal forces and power struggles are articulated on/with the young girls’ body I tease out and interrogate an allegorical web of exploration or web of dependency. The body then, becomes understood as a site on which the social and cultural are inscribed, it is a marker of those ‘good’ and ‘bad’ citizens, those whose bodies ‘fit’ and those who are regarded as pathologised outsiders—it is a body that is maintained, represented, regulated and imbued with meanings and values (Wright 2004) that speak to our Westernised, late-capitalist, neoliberal conjuncture. It is a body that is inextricably bound by a diffuse milieu of power, knowledge and mastery. Whilst this focus on the body may not be a new phenomenon, the complexities that arise and insights that are garnered when this body is (in)active offer a unique site whereby the discursive congeals and is contested and where subjectivities are sculpted in “contextually contingent ways” (Andrews 2002, p. 114).

The interdisciplinary nature of this work is conspicuous, allowing it to transgress and combine disciplines in order to better elucidate the intersections between a young girls' body and notions of governmentality and biopower (Rose 1999). Throughout the thesis I am concerned with and engage multiple foci—a hybrid theoretical and methodological position (Hall 1992)—as I grapple with how the young girls' lived experiences and everyday practices resonate with a radically contextual body politic. To this end, perhaps the major contribution of this work is the 'theorising out' of the lived experiences of the young girls. I offer readings of the body as they were being lived and realised in a distinctly heterosexy, middle-upper class, and white imaginary.

PROLOGUE

SPORTING BODIES: AN EVOLVING NARRATIVE

Researching with and for the Westernised female subject who is precariously placed within contemporary neoliberal and feminist rhetoric, I seek to open up and make visible the everyday negotiations of a group of young girls and the ways in which they sculpt their own subjectivities. To do this however, I begin by taking a ‘step back’ and reflecting upon the ‘process’ of crafting and theorising that runs through, impinges and underscores this thesis.

Prior to engaging with Foucault, Bordo, Giroux, Harris and McRobbie I knew there was something about my body, my female body and its malleability, its comportment whilst being physically active that was complicated, messy. My body as it moves through time, space and context is shaped, sculpted, marked and moulded by multifaceted gender-, race- and class-based hierarchical ideologies. Invariably these conjunctural conditions shape subjectivities, have some bearing on experiences and impact on representations that are at once constructed and consumed. Through sport and physical activity my body is invited to move, to be and to experience in a multisensual way, it is through the influence of movement that the power axes operating at any given moment are felt in a more acute and impassioned manner. As I contemplated my emergent interest in culture, power and the body I was reminded that my critical scholarship would be remiss not to note how the physical intersects with these broader social concerns (Cole 1993). Therefore as an ‘early stage’ researcher I forged a pathway through the literature—all the while pondering the complexities the physically active female entailed—and the provision of a space for sport to surface seemed essential. What became clear, however, was that a discussion premised on the distinctly fixed, unitary sporting body did not resonate with the experiences of young femininity that I encountered as I implemented and conducted my methodological practices. As such, this project is an outcome of a transpired need to sway away from ‘sport’ and ground the problematic nature of the physical within cultural discourses of femininity.

To present the thesis in the way that I have requires an understanding of how the young Franklin School (a pseudonym for the school where the ‘data gathering’ took place) girls addressed physicality (see appendix one and the girls’ responses to the images in Game

Face [Gottesman 2001]) and in turn how a pervasive physicality is (re)presented to the girls through new cultural technologies. What is more it requires an understanding that these ‘moments’ of the physical are located at the intersecting impulses of our late capitalist epoch. The everyday experiences of the girls that I will present throughout the wider thesis demonstrates that the girls clearly apprehend the physical and their own physicality, and new cultural technologies such the Nintendo Wii game “We Cheer” certainly centralise the corporeal. But it was clear that these instances were sutured to notions of gender performance, the neoliberal subject and a classed and raced, ‘normalised’ body. The thesis that follows thus takes these ‘grounding,’ ‘formative’ cultural and contextual concepts as its focus and this prologue hopefully moves us from a notion of ‘sporting lives’ and ‘sporting images’ to an understanding of the far more flexible, lucid physical form. As my scholarship evolved I was, out of obligation—an obligation that I fully embrace as I look to shed light on the most seemingly innocent operations of power (Frow and Morris 2000)—led by the girls and their musings. Specifically I was mindful to reassess my original assumption that the sporting sphere and a sporting femininity was somehow a distinctive space of experience when it became clear that although the girls did discuss their sports participation, they were reluctant to distinguish this time and space as different in terms of the sculpting, maintaining and learning their subjectivities. Whilst this could be read as a departure from a decidedly ‘sport-based’ study, its advancement reveals the consistent centralising of the physical.

This preliminary prose is intended to share with you the discernable ‘journey’ this Ph.D. has taken as a way of illuminating the need for a study that positions female physicality within the wider cultural discourses of femininity. This is a ‘journey’ that has seen the performance of femininity crystallise and refract in ways incomprehensible to the fresh faced and eager graduate who proposed the initial study; I traversed this uneven and ever-changing terrain in a way that was deeply impacted by my personal politics, *my* own biography, subjectivity and experiences and the ways in which these are layered upon and (dis)embodied. What followed was a process of reformulating my understanding of the body politic as I wrestled with how the sporting female borders and intersects with a feminine subjectivity in our historical present. I make no apology for these early ‘misgivings’ as they endow this thesis with a history, a politics and an assemblage of problematics that all good physical cultural studies endeavour to engage.

Given that “no theoretical approach has proved adequate to explain all dimensions of the body and embodiment” (Thorpe forthcoming), the interrogation of the (in)active body in all its iterations proves vital as I comprehend the everydayness of my respondents’ encounters. As my contemplations and the scholarly directives I absorbed, became written into and onto the pervasive sentiments of physicality, the logics of the sport/body nexus (Cole 1993) mapped onto the entangled contemporary discourses of new femininity, economies and the global order. Suitably then, and guided by the girls, my Ph.D. was acquiring and warranting an intensive examination of how “physicality collides with the emerging image of *new girls*” (Azzarito 2010, p. 261, emphasis in original).

Reworking Shannahan (2010 p. 673), the body became the location par excellence for the display of a certain valued and consumerable young femininity, one that has become “inseparable from the global political climate.” This meant that I (as young woman, Ph.D. student, theorist, border crosser [Giroux 2001a]) became amenable to the ‘swaying between’ or rather the consistent treading of a fine line of subject positions as the girls manoeuvred between ‘(ir)respectable,’ ‘(non)normative,’ ‘(in)appropriate’ femininity (Krane 2001). In contextually specific ways the female body as productive (heterosexually and in labour intensive terms), educated, healthy, strong, alluring and active indisputably creates a climate of ambiguity. Therefore as the girls navigated their daily lives, there was a palpable sense of them carving out an understanding of who they were and who they wanted to be, and it was in these moments of contestation that my own thesis began to take shape: my situated subjectivity and researching, politicised body served to take seriously those practices and engagements that shaped the girls’ experiences. So, whilst the girls participated in physical activity and valued it as part of their school life, the conditions or parameters for participation were suggestive of a more troubling, complicated and multifaceted picture, one that (re)established and (re)constituted the heteronormative, (hetero)sexy girl, signalled the ideological underpinnings of physical culture in our global age and requires extensive scholarly critique.

Taking forward a commitment to the promotion of performative politics (Giroux 2001a) and a vision of the theoretical as tied to the practical and every day, my early work, that which I am speaking to here, was an intricate and invaluable layering of (re)presentations.

Through the girls' narratives, their movements and interpretations during our collaborative workshops and my own reading of cultural products such as "We Cheer" I questioned the ways in which the girls articulated themselves within cultural discourses of femininity. Further, I wondered about the ways in which they participated in or contested the discourses they encountered and the ways in which they sculpted and maintained their subjectivities; their choice biographies? Considering these impulses that conjoin around the everyday experiences of femininity as this cross cuts political and social realities, I was compelled to see how, if even, this overlapped with some of my previous work with the cheerleading game "We Cheer." As such I reflect at this point upon my encounters with the game as a means of elucidating and situating it within the wider conceptualisation of the research enquiry.

'I Cheer,' 'You Cheer,' 'We Cheer'

As I looked to late capitalist cultural formations and the subsequent deployment of a feminine subjectivity, "We Cheer" offered me a site that denoted not only an example of the healthification of popular culture but related this to a construction of girlhood as innocent yet in congruence with sexiness and (hyper)femininity. This discussion is an opportunity for intellectual consideration of the mediated discursive constitution of corpulence articulated by cultural products such as "We Cheer." Throughout the thesis I explore divergent 'Media Texts' (Fusco 2006) as well as the girls' negotiations of/with them, especially as they pertain to feminine subjectivity and the moving body. Purposefully therefore, through exposing my experiences of playing the game and the reading that supplemented this 'play,' this is meant as an illustrative, contemplative and auxiliary component of the wider project that can be re-read, revisited and returned to as and when "We Cheer" surfaces in the discussion and as and when required.

The Nintendo Wii has captured the media gaze as a deliberately "active" addition to a typically sedentary activity. Utilising wireless Wiimotes (Schlomer et al. 2008) movement is detected by sensors in three dimensions, allowing for the initiation of expressive physical endeavour, transforming the formerly static, sedentary living room (Biddle et al. 2009) into a space filled with moving bodies as they row, run, hurdle, and play tennis, golf, volleyball, among a multitude of other games in the Nintendo Wii range. As of December 31, 2008 the Wii was leading the new generation of games over the PlayStation 3 and the

Xbox 360 in European sales (BBC News 2008) and thus contributing to the massive growth in the U.K. gaming markets (NPD Group 2009). Suffused with a healthified undercurrent—a fusion of physical activity and technological advancement—the Nintendo Wii commodifies health in the realm of the popular, inciting participation through an allure of entertainment and the pursuit of originality. Far from inconsequential, the promotion of (physically) active gaming facilitates the transmission of the governance of the ‘self’ and, for O’Riordan (2007, p. 239), “[t]he realization of virtual physical female bodies, through digital culture, is used to transform these images from fictional or metaphorical signs to simulations with ontological status.”

While cultural technologies (Ouellette and Hay 2008a, b) that initiate whole body movement may have become indicative of our cultural moment, it remains important to highlight the ways that these emergent media technologies, as ever, offer a cultivation of the productive citizen and are ensconced in the broader politicising of the personal. At this point I take the opportunity to introduce the Nintendo Wii game “We Cheer,” noting how this game in particular enters into my wider theorising and as a result situating it as part one of a doubly articulated research methodology (Livingstone 2007). Informed by Henry Giroux (see 2003b)—perhaps the most innovative and eloquent critic of the powerful and political nature of (popular) culture and public pedagogy—(physical) cultural technologies such as “We Cheer” can be apprehended two fold. Firstly with regard to the inclusion of physicality and secondly, and more tellingly, as issues of subjectivity and representation enter and are “manifested, challenged and rewarded in the virtual world of the video game” (Hayes 2007, p. 24).

So, within the commingling of the social and political context (Harambam, Aupers and Houtman 2011), through the development of new interactive technologies, via the availability of *new* and different subject positions and drawing on scholarly work focused on female cheerleaders (Adams 2005; Barnett 2006; Grindstaff and West 2006; Merten 1996), the digital territory of cheerleading in “We Cheer” appears to draw on the idealist representation of girls in games (Adams 2005 see Figure 1). In taking a critical interdisciplinary approach to thinking about “We Cheer” the implications it has on hyperreal depictions of the ‘normalised’ female body can be discerned. “We Cheer” does not venture into a prescription of girlhood yet, through the movement and activity

necessitated, it raises questions about the intersections between virtual pedagogies and the life worlds of young girls.

Figure 1. An image of a "We Cheer" Cheerleader. Available online from: <http://uk.wii.ign.com/dor/objects/14247618/we-cheer/images/we-cheer-20080416014205369.html;jsessionid=4j59j9sro82go> [Accessed 1st June 2011].

We (Wii) Cheer

Using the Wii-motes as virtual pom-poms, the aim of the game is to trace the glittering arrows and perform the routines to the established standard of 'cool.' Providing the participant with an "authentic cheerleading experience" (Namco Bandai 2008) means endless character customisation—choosing hair colour, skin tone, cheer uniform, and squad members—and bodily modification as the player is *invited* to "[b]urn some calories in Exercise Mode" (Namco Bandai 2008). Engaging with a variety of dancing platforms

(from championship to a captain “cheer off” and four-player party mode), “We Cheer” becomes the epitome of hyperfeminine and heteronormative ideals, complete with giggling girls dancing to impress surfer, baseball, and skater boys in settings decorated and accessorised with flowers, hearts, stars, and sparkle. Respecting the allegorical impression of white women and black men ‘doing it for daddy’ (hooks 1995), the cultural narrative of this new interactive media technology auspiciously captures the popular representation of white, slender, (hetero)sexy women dancing, cheering and “competing for the acceptance and affection of white ‘daddies”” (Boyle, Millington and Vertinsky 2006, p. 106) in an implied discourse of supportiveness, enthusiasm, glamour, sexual attractiveness and Americanised girlhood (Barnett 2006; Grindstaff and West 2006).

“We Cheer” is seen to ‘normalise’ the sexually elusive young female body, juxtaposing sound, image, and action into what becomes a congealing site of movement and being. In this sense the (physical) cultural technology was seen to conduct the corpus towards particular ‘normalising’ ends, worrisome ends that seemingly further contributed to, if not (re)constructed, a (hetero)sexy girl. The uptake of the game within this thesis has been multifaceted in that the power lines have been critiqued, examined, excavated, observed, played with, commented on and enjoyed by both myself (Francombe 2010) and the girls (see appendix two for a selection). As a consequence “We Cheer” emerges throughout this text, the readings presented and narratives told are polyvocal and it is anticipated that this will allude to the interconnectedness of culture and subjectivity as brought to light through and upon the young female body. Given this, it seems fitting to advance—and in doing so make explicit—*my* contextualisation and interrogation of “We Cheer” as I played, analysed and became one cheering body among many. It should go without saying that what has already been discussed and this subsequent ‘reading’ of the ‘Media Text’ (Fusco 2006) is dialogic and intimately bound to my positionality, my body, ‘self’ and theory, I am “actively constituted as knowing” (Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram and Tincknell 2004, p. 44).

I Cheer: I Play: I Study

Envisaged originally, as an organic exploration into digitally mediated movement rather than an investigation of game play and/or techno-wizardry, I did, to a certain extent, fashion my own path of analysis through “We Cheer.” Informed by Aarseth (2003), and

fully immersed in the cultural artefact, I played the game, watched the demonstrations, logged onto the web site, and viewed the advertisements, different performance stages, and squad profiles. Constituted around the acuity that “informed research involves play” (Aarseth 2003, p. 3), I became deeply absorbed in the game’s pedagogic discourse and where appropriate have drawn on these player experiences and techniques. My own ‘play’ left me not only somewhat sore but also ominously invested, if not captivated, by the virtual images of the cheerleaders, their looks, and their ‘moves.’ Yet at the same time this visual and synaptic seduction was precisely the predicament; the phantasmagorical bodies on display are the ‘normalised’ images of the female body that pervade the mediascape. The portrayals of the cheerleaders in “We Cheer” are the digital embodiments of the images that are ubiquitous throughout the media: slim, sexy, provocative, and all the while innocent, young, and blissfully unaware. As such these technologies carry significant cultural value as mechanisms for delivering contemporary messages concerning female ‘normality’ as it convenes around the physically active body of young girls.

“We Cheer” can be understood as a new and dynamic, virtual construct capable of expressing the need for self-surveillance, individualisation, monitoring, and sculpting the corpus toward those ends deemed as acceptable throughout heteronormative rhetoric. As a visible, textualisable, physical, cultural ‘tool,’ “We Cheer” could be termed as an actual existing space of neoliberalism (Brenner and Theodore 2002). As it is engrossed in power struggles, this text can speak to social debates and reiterate discourses surrounding femininity. I hold that it is one of many components, or resources, in the wider cultural (re)constitution of the female body. These are digital technologies that are locatable within late capitalist consumer markets as well as within the gendered production of fictional neoliberal consumer-citizens deployed throughout the empire (Heywood 2007).

“We Cheer” carries and conveys a cultural currency that does more than operate as a construct of entertainment and/or initiate a healthy lifestyle; rather, it secures credibility for particular subjectivities. I do not comprehend that “We Cheer” is simply another example of existing cultural technologies (Himes and Thompson 2007; Lewis 2008a, b; McMurria 2008; Palmer 2004; Sender and Sullivan 2008); instead the changing landscape of digital interaction and physical activity alludes to the freshness, inventiveness, and pervasiveness of “We Cheer.” Through makeovers, workout modes and publically and privately conceived virtual visions of what is ‘normal’ and ‘other’ when the girl is involved

in computer-mediated movement, the impetus is on the individual to mould her body into the digital and embodied image of the ideal girl (Piran et al. 2006).

Bring on the Cheer: Bring on the Girls

As a site of critical intellectual engagement, “We Cheer” is literally shot through with gendered and sexual politics that are consumed via a neoliberal logic of consumption-instruction. Positioned centrally with regard to discussions over the apparent postfeminist era of ‘freedom’ (McRobbie 2004a, 2007, 2008) and the new visibility of girls across the mediascape, technologies of governance such as this (re)construct the category of ‘girl’ as a subject (McRobbie 2008) and complicate the perceived *need* for a feminist address. Although this may bolster the representation of the girl within the public domain, this narrative of disavowal concurrently overshadows existing gender inequality and intergender power imbalance. In gesturing toward Gill’s (2009) contemplation of the metaphorical midriff girl that occupies the gaze, “We Cheer” evokes the female body as the foci. That is, it becomes a commentary on how these corporeal technologies ‘normalise’ girls towards the idealised cultural body (Ferris, 2003), a figure (Tyler 2008) that is young, attractive, heterosexual, active, and middle class. As a predominantly white, youthful, able-bodied display of feminine ‘norms’ (Giardina 2009), the on-screen squad and the playing, participating, active girl (through selection, customisation and the digital representation of the super cute cheerleader) are suggestive of the sexually agentic—and indeed angelic—figures found across global media and advertising (Gill 2008, 2009; Kim and Lowry 2005; LaTour, Pitts and Snook-Luther 1990; Lavine, Sweeney and Wagner 1999). The focus falls on their stylised oversized breasts, long flowing hair, long legs, sparkling smiles, made-up lips, and huge flirtatious eyes (O’Riordan 2007; Piran et al. 2006). It seems fair to propose that girls are watching and ultimately enacting within a ‘(hetero)normative’ digital economy, they are reciprocating of and responding to a digital currency that cultivates **the** female body and an efficacious digital image that transmits the gendered logic of the cheerleading body as central. The cheerleaders’ feminine features are accentuated as an effect of the clothes they wear, the dance moves or routines they perform, the stances they adopt (chest forward and central to the shot or frame), and the cornucopia of ‘camera’ angles that emphasise the voluptuous breasts and endlessly long legs of a body that is unfathomably skinny (Loland 2000; O’Riordan 2007; Piran et al. 2006) but all the while muscular (Boyle, Millington and Vertinsky 2006).

“We Cheer” positions the physically active female as hot and sexy, a consumable or consuming feminine figure in herself. From the floral patterns, in pastel colours that decorate the computer or television screen, to the customisation of ‘your’ cheer uniform, hair colour, skin tone, and squad members, “We Cheer” is a virtual world of (hyper)femininity. Via strategies of ‘normalisation,’ containment, and literalisation (O’Riordan 2007) discursive technologies such as this reproduce dominant discourses surrounding the depiction of girlhood.

In and of itself such critical work on new regulatory, embodied, physical (fleshy and digital) technologies matters because social justice and social inclusion matter (Leonard 2009). What adds impetus to my enquiry however is the ways in which the moving images of female bodies that are presented on the screens of televisions and monitors up and down the country “actualize templates for physical normality in the field of digital vision” (O’Riordan 2007, p. 248). As digital images become conjoined with actualised hyperreal physical movement, the cultural spaces that emerge cannot be left untouched by scholarly critique: “[i]t has never been ‘just a game.’ It has always been lives, livelihoods, injustice and a desire for much, much more” (Leonard 2009, p. 269).

My research then has grown from a concern with the cultural to an interest in experiences and subjectivities and it thus oscillates between these two positions. I am invigorated in this regard by a desire to understand the ways in which “We Cheer,” as one distinctive cultural technology among many, operates and provides an insight into cultural appropriations of young (in)active femininity. It transpired that “We Cheer” became a conduit for the ebbs and flows between culture and everyday life and although it does not occupy a dominant place in terms of the discussion that follows, its presence is notable and hence this explication deemed appropriate.

SYNOPSIS: A MOVE TOWARDS CRITICAL (IN)ACTIVE SCHOLARSHIP

Azzarito (2010 p. 262) contends that the emergent cultural forces produced by “global power relations inform girls’ physicality in complex and contradictory ways” and theorising these lived bodily experiences is filled with ruptures and irregularities that are reflective of multidimensional physical youth cultures. Consequently, as numerous political, economic and social relations interweave and converge upon the site of the

young female body, the nuanced nature of both the lived experiences and possible interpretations problematise any ‘neat’ and ‘tidy’ theoretical closure (Thorpe forthcoming). These initial reflections, the unfolding of my own assumptions and the ‘setting up’ of some key theoretical points of departure—that which this prologue has explicated thus far—reveals that research contending with girls’ physicality is undoubtedly ‘marked’ and complicated by the feminine ideals circulating throughout the pedagogies of our new socio-economic order (Azzarito 2010). This prologue accentuates the necessity for the wider study of physical culture—“the meanings, values and social practices concerned with the maintenance, representation and regulation of the body” (Wright 2004)—to intervene, with the intention of fleshing out, those entwined components deemed important in the physical lives of the respondents: a convergence between the contextual and the particular.

From here the thesis combines, theorises and contextualises my interactions with the girls during collaborative workshops and focus groups and it seeks to open up and make visible the myriad of conditions and possibilities that converge upon their bodies. I forward, therefore, an interrogation of the body which does not halt in accord with the limits of theoretical reasoning. Living and writing as I do within our historical present obligates, according to Holly Thorpe (forthcoming), reflexivity; “methodological and analytical dynamicism and openness” as my thesis contends with and “heighten[s] our sensitivity to various aspects of the body’s multiple dimensional relationship with society” (Shilling 2005, p 71).

1. INTRODUCTION

you want to be *the woman* in sports don't you?

Charlotte, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010, my emphasis.

you want to look feminine whilst you are doing sports

Monique, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

Sport scholars have until recently taken the body as a given without really exploring our experience of our bodies, our lived bodies . . . So before we understand the experience of sport and physical activity for women, we must begin with the female body (Carlisle Duncan 1994, p. 48).

This thesis is a response to both the scholarly and 'experienced' concerns presented in the prologue that any study or deliberation over the sporting (female) subject should begin or be grounded within the more 'general,' everyday experiences girls have with their lived bodies. Indeed within this thesis **I aim to illustrate** the ways in which the assemblage of physical cultural, practices, products, discourses and technologies relating to the body and young femininity produce public- and/or body-pedagogies that speak to the complex interplay of political, social, economic and technological impulses (Rich 2011) that cultivate and secure **the** female neoliberal subjectivity.

This has been done through an exploration of the particularities of middle-upper class, white girlhood and a theorising out from or agitating of the contemporaneous celebration of the 'normalised' body that matters (Butler 1993) and subordinating discourses that were grappled with and afforded legitimacy through both productive (re)constitution (a sense of bringing the 'self' into being) and silencing (Skeggs 2004).

I employed qualitative methodological strategies to research with and intervene into the patterns of privilege I encountered. **To best address the research problematic the thesis is structured around key discussion chapters that are focused upon** the radically contextualised governance of the female body (chapter three) (Andrews and Giardina 2008), the performance of gender (chapter four) and the ways in which it

articulates a ‘normalised’ and ‘appropriate’ femininity that is distinctively (hetero)sexy, classed and raced (chapter five).

Taking this forward I propose that the axiological and ontological orientation to intervene and promote a citizen-led, democratic research agenda is a key contribution to physical cultural studies scholarship. The essence then becomes about politics, the moments of pedagogies or educational address and linking complex theory with the learned body as experienced and lived day to day.

The rationale for my study into the cultural politics of the ‘normalised’ female body is a determination to expose and highlight pervasive power imbalances, inequalities and differing locations of power *through* the lived experiences of privileged girls. Whilst uniquely situated and perhaps offering an alternative point of analytical departure, this theorising out from positions of ‘normalcy’ (i.e. middle-upper class, white girls) no doubt sheds light and makes connections between the considered, learned, mastered and managed ‘work on the body.’ With Harris (2004a, p. 192) I want to expose this very notion of a ‘normalised’ body “by drawing attention to some of the contemporary ways” that girlhood is imagined. I look at the strategies that enable and limit the (re)constitution, (re)presentation and performance of young female subjectivities as a means to connect theory to social change, “textual analysis to practical politics” and intellectual inquiry to the social sphere” (Giroux 2001a, p. 7).

This thesis:

Is not about interpreting or judging texts or people, but about describing how people’s everyday lives are articulated by and with culture, how they are empowered and disempowered by the particular structures and forces that organize their lives, always in contradictory ways, and how their everyday lives are themselves articulated to and by the trajectories of economic and political power (Grossberg 1997a, p. 4).

Whether these power relations are explicated from positions of affordances or marginalisation they cannot be taken for granted.

As the focus of our historical present falls on the (in)visible body and the healthification of popular culture, this thesis can be read as a dialogue between the context, the empirical, the physical and the theoretical (Wright 2001). Based on my interactions with a

group of twenty, twelve and thirteen year old girls—and the ‘data’ that was collected as a result of weekly collaborative workshops and the methodological practices these encompassed—this is an excavation of their everyday lived experiences as this borders a distinctively feminised body politic. It is an exploration into ‘normalised’ young female bodies as they perform and move in ways that are learned, managed and maintained by the double(d) discourses of gender and (hetero)sexiness and the ‘other.’ In this sense it is an exploration of *wider culture* through the *particular* lived (physical) experiences of a group of school girls who attended Franklin School in the West of England. Charged by the complex concerns raised by the conditions of late capitalism, the nuances of a neoliberal political ideology, democracy and praxis, this thesis analyses the intricate dependencies and relationships between the macro and micro operations of governance as they merge around issues of the state and civic society, and as they articulate axes of power related to questions of gender, sexuality, class and race (Cole, Giardina and Andrews 2004).

1.1 FLESHY FEMININITY: A FOCUS ON THE PHYSICAL

Whilst the nomenclature of the noun ‘sport’ may be absent or seemingly silent in this study, the physical and the multiple dimensions of physicality are central. This thesis then is a “critical and theoretically driven cultural analysis” (Silk, Bush and Andrews 2010, p. 112) of movement and body practices as they comprise and crystallise “temporal and social trajectories” (Frow and Morris 2000, p. 352) related to the dissolution, (re)affirmation and (re)constitution of subjectivities (McLaren 2000). Far from conceding the physical and experiences of physicality—in its various iterations—as apolitical, I, like Silk et al. (2010, pp. 114-115) before me, forward an understanding that the planes of the corporeal are ubiquitous and pervasive, “fully immersed within a commercial media induced politicization of culture” and that the “various forms of being or representing the physical, serve as sites through which various corpora-politico-militaristic discourses are mobilized in regard to the organization and discipline of daily life in the service of particular political processes.” Throughout I muster a critical interrogation of the nexus between the body, ‘self,’ society and subjectivity and I point towards the ‘events’ (Frow and Morris 2000) and discourses of the everyday that resonate and ripple throughout the realms—political, cultural, economic, technological—of our present conjuncture (Kennelly, Poyntz and Ugor 2009). This enquiry into the late capitalist moment—marked by the “material and economic conditions in which loyalties, national borders, production,

consumption, and work are found to be contingent, shifting . . . uncertain” (Wilson 2001, p. 73) and irrefutably related to the emergence of culturally inflected floating signifiers of gendered, sexualised, classed and raced representations (Giardina 2003)—is important for scholars of (physical) culture *now* because we are, more than ever, charged to intervene into, challenge, probe and struggle with the conditions of our conjuncture vis-à-vis the sculpting of young female subjectivities (Duits and van Zoonen 2009; Harris 2003; Heywood 2007; Mendes and Silva 2009).

This thesis is thus framed by my making sense of the young female body through articulating it as one “element of the cultural terrain within a wider cultural politics” (Silk et al. 2010, p. 115); it is situated within the multifaceted and ‘messy’ borderlands where notions of agency, ‘freedom,’ ‘choice’ and first person experiences adjunct and are (re)conceptualised through the cultural conditions that simultaneously promote possibility and (re)establish the discursive processes through which the female body is made known. My research then, moves between and amongst the “official pedagogies that circulate in the media” (Silk et al. 2010, p. 115), the multivoiced, multiproduced pedagogies of the young girls and the moral and ethical pedagogies—the tacit assumptions—of the researcher. This thesis is about making sense of, that is ‘theorising out’ from, the lived experiences of a group of school girls in a quest to comprehend the ways in which they sculpt their own lived subjectivities in accordance with or against dominant discourses. To this end, I focus, in a multi-modal sense, on the mode of address through which the texts of cultural technologies—in particular significant space is given to the Nintendo Wii game “We Cheer” as a technique and technology of governance—call the corporeal into question and on the ways young girls sculpt their subjectivities in these moments of appellation (Fusco 2006).

Confronted with this empirical, political issue (Wright 2001), the thesis flows between popular (physical) cultural forms and the stories and narratives the girls told about their own, and other girls’ bodies. The ruptures that emerged offered telling glimpses into the complex and contradictory expectations and experiences of young femininity and the neoliberal ideology that heralds the power of girls. Embodying a specific form of a decidedly neoliberal subjectivity, the twelve and thirteen year old, middle-upper class, white, Franklin School girls—who I feel confident to suggest Anita Harris’ (2004a) analysis addresses when she comments on the contemporaneous ‘future girls’ and ‘can-do’

girls—occupied a precarious position as they sought to (re)present the ‘self.’ I argue that these ‘privileged’ young women dialogically deconstructed mediated forms of female subjectivity and actively and pleasurably worked on, (re)presented themselves and performed in ways that legitimised and reaffirmed a dominant, (hetero)sexy femininity. In both instances the prominent discourses of the female body were ‘played with’ and appropriated as the girls configured an ‘appropriate’ subjectivity along patriarchal and heteronormative lines. What is more, in teasing out the nature and the manner in which the girls regulated a desirable femininity I proffer that an acceptable subjectivity was maintained and (re)constructed through recourse to what the girls *were not*. Through the ‘other’—an (in)active process of ‘otherisation’—the girls were afforded the discursive space in which to delineate between bodies. This was a differentiation that was expressly classed and raced. Taking my direction once more from Silk et al. (2010), it was around these instances, sites, events, occurrences, that the need to understand the physical became imperative. Distinctively, it was at the times when social divisions were experienced, pointed out, contested and imposed that my critical engagements had to become focused towards the “injustices of the physical cultural context,” engaged as it was “on and through the body (particularly with regard to the relations, operations, and effects of corporeal power)” (Silk et al. 2010, p. 112).

1.2 CRITICAL BODILY PEDAGOGIES

Building on the undeniable need to appreciate the wider discourses of femininity when researching into female ‘sport’ and the vital location of physicality that must accompany work on female subjectivity—a notable conflation of the evolving notion of the physical and a feminist concern with the available female subject positions—this thesis is predicated upon a physical cultural studies sensibility. Bodies, movement, fleshy formulations then, are imagined to be embedded in wider societal concerns, “as it is at the very experience, representation, or organization of physical forms that such forces meet, congeal, are appropriated, mobilized, resisted, or challenged” (Silk et al. 2010, p. 115). Critical exploration of the particularities of the physical means apprehending it as an intellectual space for serious cultural examination and theorisation (Johnson et al. 2004), it is a strategy that makes links, and enquires into the complex web of relations that operate along particular temporal and spatial dimensions. Furthermore, it is a project that pushes for politically and ethically motivated research that is inextricably bound to the

extrapolation of the diffuse milieu of power that circulates when conceptions of knowledge and mastery surface and when bodies are held to account. Forwarding and communicating the ways in which the act of knowing (McLaren 2000) about femininity, a learning of the body, encounters wider socio-political, economic and historical forces situates the research within a reciprocal exchange between knowledge, teaching and integrated modalities of pedagogy (McLaren 2000). In essence the theoretical concern becomes about articulating knowledge, mastery, the expert and learner with the broader, deeper context. Further, Peter McLaren (2000) urges us in an alternative, more methodologically oriented direction, one in which pedagogy can be made to ‘work for us’ in the service of those silenced subjectivities. Expanding and igniting the notion of pedagogy through his outlining of its critical and revolutionary potential, McLaren (2000, p. 185) unshackles power/knowledge—and in doing so unshackles research—from stagnate, objective ‘truths’ and:

puts power/knowledge relations on a collision course with their own internal contradiction; such a powerful and often unbearable collision gives birth not to an epistemological resolution at a higher level but rather to a provisional glimpse of a new society freed from the bondage of the past, a vision in which the past reverberates in the present, standing at once outside the world and beside the world, in a place of insight where the subject recognizes she is in a world and subject to it, yet moving through it with the power to name it extopically so that hidden meanings can be revealed in the accidental contingencies of the everyday.

The new economies and politics of subjectivity, those ‘imagined,’ bolstered and commodified representations within late capitalism, require breaking down, elucidating the relations that made them possible in the first place (McLaren 2000). To do so means to fight to increase awareness and a Freirean inspired critical consciousness and to read into and undo the power threads of late capitalist, neoliberal rationalities (McLaren 2000). The aspirations for this form of research endeavour are threatened however, by a regressive turn towards what counts as the ‘truth’ and the forms of knowledge that are deemed legitimate. We are in a moment in which neoliberal biopolitical rationalities to ‘know’ and record are linked to a prioritising of methodological fundamentalism within academia (House 2005; Silk et al. 2010). Living and researching within this context of instrumentalisation, measurement, production output and the discernable value of exchange holds obvious consequences, not just for those individuals who this project engages but for the nature and function of academic research itself.

Physical cultural studies sits uncomfortably with a unified, profitable, legitimate neoliberal, neoscientist, evidence based research orthodoxy (Silk et al. 2010) and instead advances something decidedly more untidy, filled with tensions and contestations. Nevertheless, and expropriating Silk and Andrews (2011), I see that it is this ‘type,’ or ‘form,’ of research endeavour that is *worth* doing as it is healthily illuminating and transparent. The progressive potential is thus found not in any nice, “neatly cleared up” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 27) project, but is based upon my entry into and my dialogue(s) with the “debates surrounding ontology, epistemology, political intent, method, interpretation, expression, and impact” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p.27). My position as a border crosser (Giroux 2001a) is then, defined by the articulations I draw and the lines of flight I uncover between the physical form and the cultural terrain. To this end, the thesis makes its major contributions both theoretically and methodologically, however, conspicuous contributions also come from the girls and the resultant readings of the body as they were being lived and realised in a distinctly (hetero)sexy, middle-upper class and white imaginary.

1.3 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

Throughout the thesis I am concerned with and engage multiple foci in an effort to uncover and theorise the contingent relations of our contested cultural landscape. As was alluded to in the prologue, for this group of young girls it is no longer ‘enough’ to talk of femininity *and* sport, rather the management, maintenance and mastery of ‘appropriate’ femininity day to day was inclusive of the physical, the body, (in)activity as well as wider popular culture. From this juncture “We Cheer” was/is notable for its conflation of femininity with the incitement to be physical; it is a cultural product of a ‘moment’ in which the performance of femininity appeared to have no distinguishing boundaries, it was a source of constant negotiation, whatever the activity or scenario. As noted by Andrews (2002), the theoretical, ontological and methodological basis for a physical cultural study such as this is a truly contextual sensibility and thus the deliberate and considered centralising of the historical present has been of the up most importance.

Chapter 2 Methodology

Necessarily then, the thesis progresses from here into a discussion of methodology and begins by extrapolating the project's conceptual core. I develop an understanding of physical cultural studies as a strategy of advocacy that criticises and intervenes in a politically charged way into the "existing order of things" (Silk et al. 2010, p. 117). Problematising the need to delineate between an articulatory theory and/or method, this chapter contends with the necessary interdisciplinarity and multi method(ological) approaches to studies of the physical. It moves through an analysis of the cultural studies inspired "Marxism without guarantees," a sport specific notion of "sport without guarantees" (Andrews 2002) and arrives at and embraces the "*physical* without guarantees" in which female physicality takes precedence. Located within the unavoidable interplay between the ontological, epistemological and theoretical I introduce the strategies of inquiry that enabled the project, that is allowed for an investment in the (popular) cultural discourses of femininity and the lived experiences of the girls to be made visible/audible. This study was based on a two-part strategy, a doubly articulated research methodology (Livingstone 2007), that explored cultural technologies in conjunction with how these texts were consumed privately and publically (Silverstone and Hirsch 1992)—allowing for an exploration of the articulation between the cultural discourses that circulated around the girls' body and constructs such as gender, sexuality, race and class. The 'Media Texts' (Fusco 2006) facilitated a role of scholarly sounding board as they shaped (theoretically and methodologically) the collaborative, citizen led activities. The 'data' that frames the subsequent chapters emerges from both readings of the cultural technologies and communicative weekly workshops, focus groups with both the girls and their parents and online blogs/e-mail correspondences. The partisanship and political underpinnings of the research agenda resonate throughout this chapter (Johnson et al. 2004), specifically with reference to the 'bias' and contradictions of the researcher's body. In fact my body and its positionality are seen as unavoidably integral to the 'doing' and 'analysing'—these are conceived as anything but separate, unrelated moments—of the research process and situating these bodily experiences, as they intersect with the girls', could be considered this chapter's "primary methodological task" (Johnson et al. 2004, p. 17).

From this formulation I call for the quality of my research and its contribution to knowledge to be judged according to its axiology. Or put another way, I call for my work

to be considered as morally and ethically grounded irrespective of it transpiring and being disseminated at a time in which evidence based, scientific research provides a benchmark ‘gold standard’ (Silk et al. 2010), and the political ideologies of the here and now are fixed on measurement, recording and target setting.

Chapter 3 Governing Girlhood: The Neoliberal Subject

In chapter two I make explicit the ontological and epistemological need to contextualise, furthermore and consistent with this, my methodology implies that the ‘doing’ of research and the quality criteria that it is held to are simultaneously context specific. Emanating from this, the emphasis falls on the need to scrutinise the wider social discourses of the current socio-political climate. In focusing on the broader cultural underpinnings of everyday interactions chapter three is suggestive of the need to locate research within the cultural shifts of the present. Directed from here on in by the theorisation of the girls’ lived experiences, this chapter is a discussion of the ways in which neoliberalism has impacted and brought to light the relations of the economy and the ‘normal’ body. I introduce neoliberalism as a form of governmentality, a governing at a distance that manifests itself on the body through a turning in on ‘the self’ (Kennelly et al. 2009). Individuals are imbued with a directive to become responsible, productive, self-monitoring citizens and to consume themselves into ‘appropriate’ being (Walkerdine and Ringrose 2006). Borrowing heavily from Girls Studies research, “a subdivision of Women’s and Gender Studies that focuses on youth cultures and the sociology of youth specific to girls,” (Heywood 2007, p. 102) this chapter then draws together the notions of bio- or body- politics, neoliberal governmentality, individualisation and responsabilisation by centering the discussion on the cultural fascination with girlhood and the girl as the neoliberal subject par excellence (Harris 2003, 2004a, b). In this chapter I essentially explore, interrogate, ground and unpack the contextual thrust that resounds right the way throughout this thesis, noting how it reverberates throughout (popular) cultural technologies and impacts upon cultures of the (female) body.

Chapter 4 Gender Performance & Technologies of Femininity

Formulated upon the illumination of the complex and contradictory discourses concerning young femininity, those that seemingly offer a sense of ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’

yet are at once conducive to state imperatives and market logics, chapter four situates the everyday gendered performance of female subjectivity. Building upon a conceptualisation of the technologies of femininity framework that guided and commanded my theoretical position and my understanding of the ‘data,’ this chapter delves into the ways in which the girls experience themselves and negotiate their physicality in relation to cultural forces. By drawing on powerful discourses of ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate,’ the girls (re)produced and (re)configured a form of feminine subjectivity that they would vigorously and pleasurably ‘take up,’ while at the same time alluding to an undesirable femininity that they stigmatised and actively avoided. The mapping of these interlaced and intricate movements between culture and agency, critique and consumption, is facilitated by an analysis of certain amalgamated technologies of femininity: popular (physical) culture, girls looking at girls and boys looking at girls, diet, exercise and the body beautiful and aesthetic stylisation.

Chapter 5 Normalised Bodies: ‘Chavs’ & ‘Chinese Hair’

The personalisation of the care of the physical ‘self’ and a directing of this subjectivity towards what transpired to be an acceptable form of physicality spoke to ideas concerning governmentality and biopower and how these are manifestations of the logic of neoliberalism on the body of young girls. Chapter four outlines the ways in which the performance of this desirable subjectivity became a site through which knowledge concerning gender and sexuality was realised. In this chapter I ‘operationalise’ and question this ‘appropriate’ femininity in terms of a ‘normalised’ body politic, one that when mobilised in a (hetero)sexy, middle-upper class and white imaginary is entirely contextual and predicated and propelled by the forceful impulses of class and race. Pointing towards a neoliberal silencing of the structural conditions that perpetuate inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Giroux 2003b; Gilroy 2005; Walkerdine 2003) and the noticeable interpolation of individual responsibilisation, it is suggested that class and race have evolved and perhaps changed or become multidimensional but they have far from disappeared. Harnessing an understanding of neoliberalism as (still) a classed and raced ideology and forwarding the impression of a ‘normalised’ body that was exhibited by the girls, this chapter responds to a need to analyse how, and in what ways, class and race matter in the performance of contemporary femininity.

The final chapter in this thesis is reserved for my conclusions. Although it synthesises my theorising of the lived experiences of the girls it should not be read as the cessation of this project. Rather, this commentary charges physical cultural studies' scholars to expand upon and elaborate the theoretical and methodological insights that have been brought to bear. Animated by a need for my research to intervene and create an impact, motivated by the insights made possible by interdisciplinarity, guided by the Franklin School girls and tasked with the job of (re)telling and (re)writing their bodily experiences, I have utilised this section of my thesis to draw out and explicate the pedagogical that pulsed and fluttered throughout. Borrowing heavily from Giroux (2001a) and McLaren (2000), a *physical performative pedagogy of subjectivity* actively brings together the essence of the physical as well as the moral and ethical referent to which the study speaks. It allows for a closure (of sorts) in which the (multiple) theoretical and methodological innovations of the thesis nestle alongside a requisite for 'action' and struggle against or are read with regard to certain historical and political linkages, developments and connections (McLaren 2000).

1.4 CORPOREAL CONTRIBUTIONS: AN INVITATION TO INTERPRET

Since the rise of feminist scholarship in the 1970s, some have taken a direct interest in studying girls as a unique social group. Such a change in direction is part of an overall trend in acknowledging that "children" are not a homogenous group. As a result, researchers have become increasingly interested in taking a closer look at the lives of girls, examining them in relation to sexuality, identity, education, popular culture, consumption, and more (Mendes and Silva 2009, p. 109).

The structure and organisation of this thesis, in and of itself tells a story and offers an insight into the ways in which a group of girls sculpt their subjectivities day to day. Thus, as the discussion that follows shifts between and beyond the initial contextual mapping of the neoliberal moment,—in which the immersion of the 'girl' within this ideology and rhetoric is pertinent—the girls' articulation of a performance of the 'self' was seen to be noticeably and forcibly gendered. The crafting and (re)constitution of a subjectivity that was desirable—attractive to both male and female peers—resulted in the (re)establishment of a 'normative' femininity. However, this 'normativity,' desirability and acceptability was often discussed and experienced in relation to another subject formation:

a pathological and deviant body. Resultantly, the twofold perception of 'normalcy' required disentangling especially as it engendered significant consequences for those 'other' girls whose bodies 'appropriate' femininity was read against.

For me, the thesis is multilayered, it moves back and forth between a dialogue of desirability in (hetero)sexy terms and an assumption of, or even (re)constitution, of the 'norm.' What is presented on the pages that follow are thus my interpretations, of course theory helped me understand, discuss and comprehend the (re)working and (re)production of young female subjectivities and their contextual specificity, but for each reader the interpretations taken may differ. At this point therefore I do not offer one reading, but many, conflicting, contradictory and ambiguous narratives that in and of themselves tell us something about the nature of young femininity and the young body. They provide us with 'snapshots' of the formations of dominance and privilege and how they discursively and materially maintained, preserved, sustained (and embodied even) the boundaries between the 'normalised' girl that mattered (the Franklin School girls) and the 'other,' the marginalised, abject girl who simply did not (and was not) fit.

2. METHODOLOGY

Premised upon my evolving even unpredictable comprehension of the (in)active woman's body, within this chapter I put together, lay the foundations and set the 'parameters' for the physical cultural study of young female subjectivity. Out of necessity I challenge the inconvenient truth(s) of positivist social science criticism and in doing so propose an anti-reductionist appreciation of the methodological flexibility, the active ethical and moral axiology of the research project and the blurring of the boundaries between the 'researcher' and the 'researched'—a convergence of 'I' and 'we'/'Wii', 'me' and 'the girls.' This chapter then, situates itself, quite comfortably and healthily within moments of contestation, differentiation and tension (Silk and Andrews 2011); just as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) invoke the qualitative researcher as bricoleur, so this chapter can, and should, be read as a montage of ontological, epistemological, political, method(ological), interpretive, expressive, composite and impacting dialogues (Silk and Andrews 2011).

The performative, creative, political, contested, (in)active female body offers analytic opportunities, moments, in which conversations concerning the cultural environment emerge. These body logics (Giardina and Newman 2011) and the narratives of the body we tell harness the dynamism of contemporary society and place, and illuminate, the corporeal within everyday life, within micro and macro political imperatives, within knowledge formation, within social interactions and ultimately within any research encounter. Exploring and grappling with 'experience' and 'meaning' as they are related to the shaping of contingent subjectivities is, therefore what "cultural studies work attempts to do" (Gray 1997, p. 100). As a mode of "politically compelled intellectual inquiry" (Andrews and Giardina 2008, p. 408), the cultural studies understanding that I deploy seeks to (re)affirm the necessity to inquire into power structures, social formation and the 'politics' of young female physical subjectivities (Turner 1990). The conceptual—ontological, theoretical, methodological—core of the thesis, and therefore of principle importance, is an understanding of physical cultural studies as an engaged, contextualised, politicised, interdisciplinary interpretive field (Andrews 2002).

Since its inception in the face of postwar social change in Britain—an attempt to "address the manifest break-up of traditional culture, especially class cultures" (Hall 1990, p. 12) and "on the cusp of . . . 'post-Fordism'" (Kellner 1997, p. 15)—cultural studies has

become a somewhat scholarly force. Although it is increasingly contested in a corporatised, evidence-based academic environment (Carrington 2001; House 2005; Silk et al. 2010), it transcends national and disciplinary boundaries. Through debate and dialogue, and reflective of the evolving social scene and political struggles, British cultural studies, originating as it did from the Birmingham group (Kellner 1997), was—and still is—responsible for a plethora of diverse research that expanded and evolved from Hoggart’s understanding of the everyday experiences of specific classes (Turner 1990) towards a “focus on the interplay of the representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality in cultural texts, including media culture” (Kellner 1997, p. 16). Detailing the advancement of cultural studies over the last few decades is beyond the scope of this chapter; suffice to say that the development of my cultural studies sensibility is firmly rooted in an understanding of culture as intimately bound up with the study of wider power configurations (Giroux 2004a). These are multiple and diverse in their manifestation and stem from a research agenda directed by the genealogical developments of the tradition (for comprehensive reviews please see Andrews and Loy 1993; Carrington 2001; Hartley 2003; Johnson 1986-1987; Lee, Mudimbe and Jewsiewicki 2003; Miller 2001; Nelson, Treichler and Grossberg 1992; Schulman 1993; Turner 1990). As a consequence, I am more concerned now with locating this research within the theoretical and methodological sphere of physical cultural studies, noting along the way how and where axiological and ontological resonances reside. With Slack (1996), I mobilise the terms theory and method cautiously and not unproblematically throughout, not wanting to connote any sense of rigidity, formalism, objectivity and/or separation between these designations.

The interdisciplinary nature of this work is clearly perceptible, by conceptualising theory as a ‘detour’ (Slack 1996) through disciplines, the cultural studies researcher thus requires the academic arsenal to elucidate and ground their engagement with constructs such as gender, sexuality, class and race. As the proliferation of work in this area reveals, theoretical rationale can be gathered and ‘tried out’ (Slack 1996) from any of the major bodies of thought: Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism and postmodernism (a partial list). What is more, animated by notions of subjectivity and power (Miller 2001) and following Andrews and Loy (1993, p. 2), these interdisciplinary insights and modes of analysis can be brought to bear upon a diversity of research spaces such as: “subcultures, education, working class history, leisure, women’s studies, race and

ethnicity, and media studies.” Somewhat formulated upon this, cultural studies, as a “critical and deconstructive project” (Hall 1996a, p. 150), is held to account on two rather competing—although reciprocal—thrusts. Guided by Andrews (2002), delineating cultural studies is seen as a daunting task, oft described as “unity-in-difference” (Hall 1992), Grossberg (1992) opined that it is concerned with multiple foci—a hybrid theoretical/methodological position. At the same time that this is apprehended as its strength, Stuart Hall (1996a, p. 150) counters the anticipated criticism this may arouse through highlighting the problematic of codification, the contentiousness of institutionalisation (see Bennett 1997) and the requisite for cultural studies to remain “open-ended” and not be deployed as “just one more paradigm” among many.

Rather than eradicate, agonise over, or search for a solution to the ambiguity and heterogeneity in the epistemological foundations of cultural studies (Slack 1996), Hall (1992) urges us to ‘wrestle with angels’ and embrace the notion that cultural studies is unequivocally (Andrews and Loy 1993), a contested terrain (Grossberg 1989). More than providing a doctrine for *how* to carry out research, cultural studies is significantly more of a critical intellectual sensibility (Andrews 2002; Grossberg 1997a); it focuses on a site whereby social forces, discourse and discursive practice congeal, congregate, are contested and where subjectivities—physical subjectivities—are sculpted in “contextually contingent ways” (Andrews 2008, p. 56). In seeking to excavate and theorise the social world, the notions of context, and contextualism more specifically (Grossberg 1997b), are brought to the fore (Andrews 2002; Slack 1996), the form of interrogation advanced offers a dialectic discourse, a scholarly struggle, and the proclivities of Stuart Hall’s (1996b) “Marxism without guarantees.”

Borrowing directly from Slack (1996, p. 125, emphasis in original), the cultural critic does the work of extrapolating the context, contending with the interfusion of social forces that are (re)articulated, while remaining cognisant that “the context is not something *out there, within which practices occur or which influence the development of practice*. Rather, *identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities or effects*.” Multiple social forces and axes of power are, as a consequence, complexly articulated and the theoretical space or lacuna opened, to continue with Slack’s (1996) phrasing, readily requires anti-reductionist interrogation that refrains from the disempowering “possibility of reducing culture to class or to a mode of production”

(Slack 1996, p. 121). The avoidance of partial, one-sided explanations (Hall 1996b) is thus responded to by Hall's (1985) logic of necessary and non-necessary correspondences—a reworking of how we approach the cultural realm, calling for “a different conception of ‘determinancy’” (Hall 1996b, p. 44), one that rejects:

The economically deterministic perils of so-called vulgar Marxism (which asserted a *necessary correspondence* between the various elements of society and the overbearing economic real) and the romanticism of cultural humanism (which asserted a *necessary no correspondence* between the various elements of society, thus providing the human agent and cultural practices with a romanticized level of autonomy) (Hall, 1985) (Andrews 2002, p. 112, emphasis in original).

Utilising this formation I regard cultural studies as teasing out articulations embedded within an allegorical web of exploration or web of dependency; realising that examination unearths not simply an over determination upon the economic (Willis 1998), but the complex interplay of the historical, social, political *and* economic (Andrews 2002, 2008; Grossberg 1992). Class therefore, can only be read as being inextricably bound by the embodied and inscribed hierarchical meanings around gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability and age (Andrews and Giardina 2008; Giroux 2000)—this is not to say that some form of prior determinancy does not exist, rather these relations just cannot be guaranteed in advance (Andrews 2002; Andrews and Giardina 2008). The unique, and perhaps most indispensable notion to take from a ‘Hallian’ (McGuigan 2006) inspired cultural studies, is the necessity to unpack these axes of power, these lines of flight, that penetrate, amalgamate and are contested at particular sites, at particular moments in history. This contextual mapping of social formations (Andrews 2002)—the theory and method of articulation (Hall 1996a)—does, according to Grossberg (1997a, p. 347) transform “cultural studies from a model of communication . . . to a theory of contexts.”

Cultural studies then is animated by “subjectivity and power—how human subjects are formed . . . how they experience cultural and social space” (Miller 2001, p. 1) and how they position themselves (Hall 1996a). For my research project this commitment to/with the politics of (re)articulation (Hall 1987) involves starting with the banal, scrap of the ordinary and working to establish the intersecting domains that inform it (Andrews 2002, 2008; Frow and Morris 2000). Articulation, as a generative theory, methodology, epistemology, discursive metaphor (Hall 1996a; King 2005; Slack 1996) is driven by historicity and politics and is regarded as “a way of characterizing a social formation

without falling into the twin traps of reductionism or essentialism” (Slack 1996, p. 112). Understanding that the ‘self’ or site of research is always woven with to the powerful axes that mark the present involves (Hall 1996a):

a way of thinking the structures of what we know as a play of correspondences, non-correspondences and contradictions, as fragments in the construction of what we take to be unities. Politically, articulation is a way of foregrounding the structure and play of power that entail in relations of dominance and subordination. Strategically, articulation provides a mechanism for shaping intervention within a particular social formation, conjuncture or context (Slack 1996, p. 112).

As a cultural scholar in an era marked by late capitalist neoliberal governance, I mobilise a politics of articulation to theorise and ‘work with’ the relations of culture, power (Bennett 1997) and subjectivity. As Silk, Andrews and Mason (2005) ascertain, the dialogic, relational, layered and disparate flow of theoretical and method(ological) sensibilities throughout an empiricists’ narrative are interrelated and realised through this ethos of contextualisation (King 2005). Resultantly, articulation is at once a way of conceiving “how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, *and* a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures” (Hall 1996a, pp. 141-142, my emphasis). Put another way, this involves a process of linking, being guided by an exploration through the complex borderlands—the place where the exciting research happens—between practice and a/effect, text and meaning, and importantly experience and politics (Grossberg 1992). Undoubtedly the narratives I tell will be unavoidably multifaceted as the research transgresses disciplines and wrestles with how lived experiences and everyday practices resonate with our contemporary realities. Developing Grossberg’s (1992) eloquent summary, I hope to convey a story of the myriad of fragments, practices, effects, contexts, (re)presentations that point not to a neat and tidy crescendo building climax but rather to the *creativity* of forging connections and configuring what we know and how we come to know it (Slack 1996): “[c]ultural practices are the sites of many different ways, at different tempos, constructing different contexts” (Grossberg 1992, p. 63).

Whilst I refer to articulation and describe it within my episteme, I am mindful to engage a critique and a formation that demonstrates that it is an emergent and unfinished phenomenon (Slack 1996), lest I reify and legitimise its determinism and reinstate a

systematic form of analysis so refuted by those in the field. Putting aside the complexity of defining articulation—a complexity compounded by the cultural studies conception that theory and method(ology) are “mutually constitutive” (King 2005, p. 24)—I am drawn to its potential impact on an oeuvre that is committed to (re)constructing, (re)constituting and (re)interpreting culture with deliberation of the underlying and diffuse milieu of power (King 2005). I advance therefore an articulatory methodological framework.

2.1 CULTURAL STUDIES: SITUATING THE PHYSICAL

Compelled by the physical I write the body, body movement, “the body . . . as a locus of politics and praxis,” (Giardina and Newman 2011, p. 37) into my cultural studies formations, yielding its value and pertinence in an interrogation of the British cultural terrain. Following Giardina and Newman (2011), through the study of body cultures and body politics I look to better articulate wider cultural politics in the service of particular political agendas, contextualizing the physical within “power relations, directions and effects” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 15). Methodologically then, the ‘practice’ of articulation envisages a relationality between the social, political, economic, cultural conditions and specific sites, moments, instances, people, practices and places—that is a process of constructing and reconstructing, speaking to/with and listening back/from, noting how they are implicated, fabricated and shaped contingently (King 2005). The physical cultural studies researcher is subsequently “dedicated to . . . understanding . . . the corporeal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power” (Andrews 2008, p. 54), and while by no means prescriptive, they will deploy certain practices and strategies to aid in the interrogation of the physical as it borders the social. Encouraged by and beholden to Michael Silk and David Andrews (2011, p. 17)—and their adaptation of Frow and Morris (2000)—physical cultural studies investigations are:

likely to involve: an account of the local and global economic context; the aesthetic context; the political context that addresses the mundane and the politics of physically active bodies in space, gendered and racialized context (such as the organization of gender and racial relations by a mythologized spatial structure); the historical context; a consideration of physical forms, structures, and experiences as a textual construct and as a form of popular culture directly interrelated with other cultural forms and with an economy of representations and practices that make up a way of

life; and in an effort to get at the particularities of lived experience, deployment of various strategies of inquiry. This, likely far from exhaustive, list points to the interplay between physical lived experiences (lived realities), texts (discourses / discursive mediation), and the social context (Saukko 2003).

The ontological and epistemological grounding of this research is an expression of multiplicity, the parameters of the physical cultural research project are there to be manipulated, pushed and pulled at, as divergent theories and methods are utilised to understand that which is experienced. From this starting point of comparative abstraction (Silk and Andrews 2011), cultural forms and physical subjectivities are interrogated in ways that make known the articulatory power forces and social struggles that inform them. Moving away from a distinctly cultural studies call for a “Marxism without guarantees,” and somewhat reworking and redirecting the notion of “sport without guarantees” (Andrews 2002)—a rerouting predicated on a shift away from a focus on unified *sport* forms (Andrews 2002)—I offer and forward a sensibility of a “*physical* without guarantees” in which the study of female physicality takes seriously the entwined trajectories and investments in sport, pedagogy, femininity, embodiment and social practices and relations (Hills 2010; Wright 2004, see prologue also).

Embedded within the political and ethical imperative of the physical cultural studies project is a dedication to intervene. The project is thus imbued with a principled and moral discernment towards ‘change’ through the analysis “of power relations (sometimes liberatory, oftentimes repressive, frequently both)” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 16) that mark, are ‘played out’ and appropriated onto and by the “everyday physical” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 16). Silk and Andrews’ (2011) posturing for a commitment to praxis and democracy requires, to reiterate a point made previously, locating the physical within social, political, economic and technological linkages; recognising that any interrogation of the physical empirical must attempt to comprehend the dynamism and multiplicity of our historical epoch (Christians 2000; Denzin 2005). Indeed, critical investment of this nature can be ‘characterised’ by its interdisciplinarity, anti-formalism, flexibility (King 2005; Silk et al. 2005) and methodological contingency—advocating the utilisation of the methodological tools that best enable the project. Much like cultural studies, a “*physical* without guarantees” refutes reliance on a singular method or theory (Hall 1992; Nelson et al. 1992) or the application of rigidity when engaged in the research process. Rather as Samantha King (2005) cites, I advocate and mobilise this aforementioned contextualism

or articulation as a (notably loose and interrelated) methodological framework for understanding, analysing, mapping and shaping the ‘constant battlefield’ that is cultural life (King 2005; Slack 1996). As such, methodological practices (see Johnson et al. 2004) are considered as a mechanism for interrogating the site, explicating the fissures and illuminating, even problematising the sense of understanding that is uncovered.

The ‘field’ of the physical is engaged in a continuous struggle to comprehend the complex intricacies of social interaction within the wider socio-historical, socio-cultural worlds in which they exist (Silk et al. 2005). Following Silk’s (2005) contention that social realities will vary from person to person, a commitment to shedding light on the multiple meanings and discourses with regard to young femininity and girlhood had clear implications for the ways in which I embarked upon gathering and piecing together knowledge of the social world. Drawing on the foundational features of the research paradigms, and formulated upon the credence that “there is no fixed meaning of the ideal girl,” (Adams and Bettis 2003, p. 75) my methodological practices were ushered out of a comprehension of the young girl as an active agent of articulation (Scott and Usher 1999), a realisation that realities are multiple, subjective and dialogic (Johnson et al. 2004) and that insight is gained through fluid, flexible, engaged and ruptured designs that emerge as a project unfolds (Silk 2005). So, as a physical cultural studies scholar I am informed by, adherent to and comfortably driven and impelled by “relativist ontologies . . . interpretive epistemologies . . . and . . . naturalistic . . . methods” (Silk et al. 2005, p. 5). Conceiving of physical culture relationally negates the isolated, measureable, neutral objectivity of paradigmatic positivism and gestures more towards the critical paradigm that embraces the theoretically driven analysis of physical culture (Markula and Silk 2011) and is bound by questions of social inequalities, of domination and subordination (Slack 1996), of power as a source of contestation, resistance and repression (Bennett 1997), of the ‘self,’ the personal and the (dis)located. The stance of the critical researcher is set on promoting participatory and collaborative analysis (Silk and Andrews 2011) that endeavours to capture lived experiences and excavate, transform, enlighten and theorise the everyday (Duits 2008).

2.2 ON THEORISING OUT: A NOTE ON WRITING

The complexity of the ways in which the (in)active body articulates, for example, issues such as (hetero)sexiness, class and race, as well as the multiparadigmatic (Denzin and Lincoln 2005) imperative forwarded, proffers a position of engaged advocacy (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994; King 2005; Maguire 1991) and the deployment of the ‘tools’ of research that are in no way hegemonic. These are research ‘tools’ that are formulated upon the current climate and my ontological and epistemological position. The political assiduousness that leads one to interrogate the linkages between lived bodily experiences and wider social processes involves researching in a climate of collaboration, citizenship and community that is conducive to Paulo Freire’s (1972) sensibility of the collective critical consciousness. Derived from this understanding, as well as those outlined so far, I began to examine rigorously aspects of physical culture that implicated girls’ bodies. I developed a constructive forum for discussion and exploration, heightened awareness and ‘created’ a climate whereby the girls’ (and my own) thoughts, experiences, critique could be documented, amended and extended in a way that reflected the indispensable obligation of my project to not only understand but also to intervene (Silk and Andrews 2011).

Power entered my research in insipid and simultaneously invigorated ways, weaving through the essence of our interactions, the presence of our bodies and the representations we produce(d) and consume(d). Linda Duits’ (2008) discussion of the qualitative ethnography that arose from her desire to take seriously the multicultural experiences of a group of girls in the Netherlands ends with a ‘note on writing.’ Informative as this may be, I instead begin my *introductions* with a ‘note on writing’ as I view and uphold the power dynamics of the written word and impart my understanding that the crafting of the thesis is intimately linked to the power that enters the process of research. The text written on the page, although taking the girls’ experiences sincerely then, is never thought of as more than localised and partial representations. Like Duits (2008) I write therefore, of ‘the girls’ and not ‘girls’ as my study unearths and unfolds the multilayered everyday of a particular group, at a particular moment and strives to *theorise out*, not generalise about, society.

In much the same way, the site of the research—as somewhere chosen, negotiated, manipulated, defined and conceptualised—operated beyond the definitional boundaries of the school and was investigated as a discursive and sanctioned space “for a few girls to create multiple gendered subject positions and accommodate the shifting and often contradictory meanings of normative adolescent femininity” (Adams and Bettis 2003, p. 74). Researching within the structures of the school—a pre-existing site—“meant that a number of choices regarding the population had already been made” (Duits 2008, p. 58): assumptions, positionalities and subjectivities are abound and populate this project from the start.

2.3 INTRODUCTIONS: FRANKLIN SCHOOL

The cultural climate in which Basil Bernstein argued the notion of the Totally Pedagogised Society (Singh 2001; Tyler 2001) is indicative of a time of global economic uncertainty, whereby the necessity to possess and/or acquire different pedagogic ‘knowledge’ about the ‘self’ requires the individual to be ‘put to work.’ As a consequence it has become necessary for individuals to possess, acquire, actively engage in a project of the ‘self’ and the regulation of everyday experience befalls and has become infused with discourses of trainability and performance (Evans, Rich, Allwood and Davis 2008). With reference to the school girl, it is the combined pervasiveness of this directing and prescriptive pedagogy throughout popular culture as well as within the structures of the school walls—the entwined expectations of the ‘formal’ (P-policy) and ‘informal’ (p-policy)—that brings about an all-encompassing “‘knowledge economy’ relating to the body” (Evans et al. 2008, p. 387). Additionally, Oliver and Lalik (2004) attend to the specificities of the narratives of the female body within cultural sites such as the school and raise the subject of the hidden body curriculum within the schooled space. Taken together, these two studies shed valuable light on the contemporaneous school site and a wide reaching social and curricular politics of the corporeal. In this sense the decision to ‘enter the field’ and engage the girls whilst they were at school maintained and seemed to concur and support the project’s potential to comment, intervene upon and resonate with wider society. Furthermore and fortunately, I also happened upon a school that embraced the participatory perspective and willingly encouraged the spirit of work that sought to highlight and disrupt dominant discourses of femininity and “support girls in developing healthier and more ascendant views of their bodies” (Oliver and Lalik 2004, p. 557). What

is more, and importantly, the logistical and practical imperatives that drove the completion of this project—a feature that I feel we should not be ashamed to concede—were undeniably met by carrying out my research in and with Franklin School (Duits 2008).

I do not delineate the school demographic at this point as a way of setting out the strictures of the study, nor as a way of ‘justifying’ my position there. Instead, I do so as I believe this contextualisation as intricately related to the subjectivities of the girls. They experienced—and I observed and experienced with them—as school girls, school girls that were in the ‘privileged’ position to be attending a mixed private school in a city in the West of England. Whilst class cannot be read explicitly into the biographies of the ‘self’ they told to me (with one notable exception), class can certainly be read into their educational pathways. As one of the region’s largest day and boarding schools, Franklin School was understood to attract those students from middle-upper class families—although the exact composition of the school was never discussed. With a strong academic and extra-curricular focus the *schooled body* was certainly centralised and its performance nurtured and directed. Thus the girls were fundamentally attached to the worlds they inhabited; they were gendered and culturally situated (Johnson et al. 2004). With this in mind, the blurring of the lines of authority between the school, the researcher and the participant was never a complete and attainable facet of this project, rather I appreciate that there is no singular truth (Angrosino and Mays de Perez 2000); there is no single voice of authority. The meanings attributed and emotions expressed were individual experiences and their essence remained in this subjectivity. Supplementing this predominant position, the girls were never viewed as sources of ‘data,’ but they were held as being implicated in the project (Eichhorn 2001). Quite apart from treating them as ‘others’ or leaving them feeling cynically and instrumentally used, they were central to the research process, expanding on and elucidating my strategies and supplementing my ‘readings’ with lived experiences.

2.4 INTRODUCTIONS: ‘HERE COME THE GIRLS’¹

I had weekly lunch hour meetings with a group of twenty Franklin School girls over the course of a school term. It was hoped that by maintaining the voices of the girls at the centre of the research—but only as far as their narratives bordered mine—the power imbalance between researcher and young girl may have been in some way ‘managed,’ nevertheless my study remains bound by the many competing positions that were occupied. Accordingly, I espouse a need not to search for an omnipresent reality, but somewhat more of an incisive attempt “to make sense of, or intercept, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, pp. 3-4). Working the hyphen in such a manner compels a sense of multivocal disclosure from both the girls and myself (Behar 1993; Fine, Weiss, Weseen and Wong 2000). This reciprocal approach to collaborative research is increasingly emerging as an important factor in an ethical and moral project (Eichhorn 2001) as it discerns the inherent situatedness of personal subjectivities related to gender, sexuality, class and race and celebrates the uniqueness of accessing the experiences of people (Christians 2005; Denzin 1997; Markula and Denison 2005). It should be said that in the quest for anonymity the girls’ names have been changed throughout.

In this vein, and not wanting to ascribe any demographic brushstroke over their subjectivities, I introduce the girls through fictionalised narrative biographies. In my first meeting with the girls they were assigned a task to tell me all the things about themselves that they thought it was important for me to know. Before I attend to how the tasks in the early workshops facilitated the creation of these narratives, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight that throughout our meetings I adopted the same style or approach when I presented the girls with tasks. I would verbalise them, ensure that they understood what I meant and respond to any questions that they may have had. I then placed numerous Task Cards (see Figure 2) on the tables so that the girls could read what I would like them to do. Having tangible cards available also allowed the girls to refer back to them at any point during the sessions for further clarification or as a reminder:

¹ This sub-title is taken from Ernie K-Doe’s song title “Here Come The Girls” that was originally released in 1970 and was re-released following its use as the soundtrack for the British beauty store Boots in their 2007 commercials.

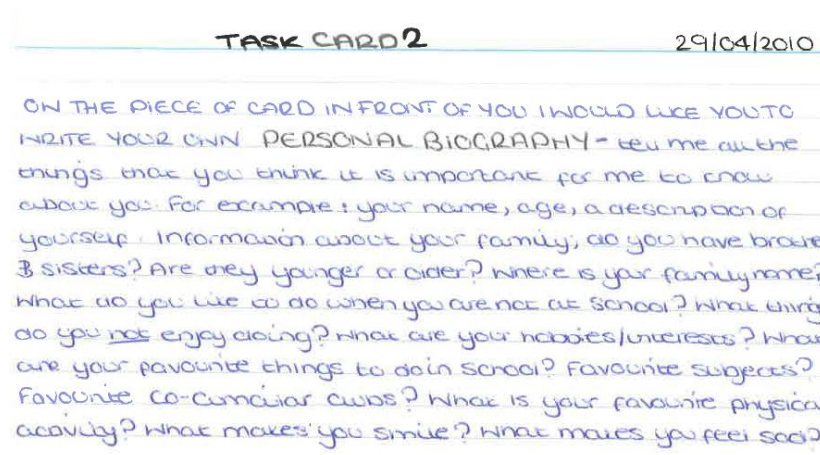
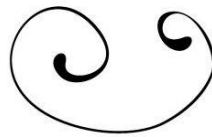


Figure 2. Task Card from Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

As I mentioned previously these early ‘sessions’ were initially about us getting to know each other and the workshops developed a ‘body focus’ as our conversations progressed and the weeks progressed. One task for example required the girls to construct a narrative about a young woman who was active (see appendix three for a selection). Premised on their initial responses, interactions and conversations, as well as these stories they wrote about active femininity, I elicited an eclectic glimpse into the girls’ understandings of themselves, their preoccupations, their affections and indifferences, their physicality. This was an infusion of the notion of imagination (Mills 2000) with the generation and exploration of new theory (Delamont and Atkinson 2003) that remained situated in the life-worlds, words and bodies of those girls who were/are fundamental to this project. As such I appreciate and endorse, at this point, the utilisation of literary narratives (Markula and Dension 2005); these are the accumulated effort of both the girls and myself (although uniquely constructed in terms of spatiality and temporality). In interweaving their own words with my own observations, the girls and how they experienced themselves everyday emerge through these stories. Moreover the things that are important *to them* and our subsequent comprehension *of them* are permitted to take precedence in a suitably fitting way.

There is no denying that these essayistic representations are markedly political as I consciously engage with the competing colloquy that make them never innocent, fixed or neutral (Richardson 2000). However, I allocate the space in this thesis for these voices to emerge in this form and for this function (Denison and Rinehart 2000), not as some form of self-indulgent ‘navel gazing’ (Sparkes 2002) but because what was discussed in their biographies, stories and personal maps—both the written and the drawn (see appendix four for a selection)—and the silences that resound indeed interlace throughout the analysis and throughout the ways in which their school girl subjectivities were sculpted and (re)constituted in contextually specific ways. The resonances between “life events and inner musings, inner-sense making” (Denison and Rinehart 2003, p. 2) facilitated an evocativeness and emotion as the girls understood, described and contended with the ‘self’ and contemporary (active) femininity. Were space to allow then each girl would introduce herself individually, however given the present circumstance in which these experiences materialised and are being disseminated these condensed accounts are considered appropriate in providing a visceral sense of the girls I interacted with.



7 am. The start of another school day, Louisa emerges from a sleepy slumber to the sound of her alarm, quickly followed by a sibling scramble in the hallway to get to the shower first. You would think in a house with more than one bathroom that these moments of frenzied panic would be diminished. Averting her eyes away from the ticking hands Louisa’s tempo is instead dictated by her wandering thoughts: what day was it? What lessons did she have? Where did she put the book she was reading? Did she have her oboe and sheet music packed? More to the point did she have her PE kit packed? She winces, her body recoiling at the thought of those horrible, unflattering shorts; every time she put them on she was reminded of how her body was changing, developing. At thirteen—yes that’s right at last a teenager!!—Louisa was in the transitional period between the lower and upper school, a year shaped by the school’s work hard and the girls’ socialise hard ethics. She recounts often how busy she is because of school and prep, plus revision. This morning her procrastination is temporary though and interrupted by the sudden arrival of her older, and according to everyone, thin, pretty sister into her room. “I need the hair straighteners, can I borrow your PE socks, where is my lip gloss? Why on earth aren’t you up yet?” Responding to none of the above but heeding the directive Louisa gets out of bed and begins the process of getting ready. The saving grace for her is that having a school uniform limits the choice of attire, and with school rules to follow regarding hairstyle and make up there is only room for a styling of

the fringe (her long hair is controlled by a plain black scrunchy), a sneaky covering of lip gloss and squirt of perfume. Ready! She wonders how this routine will change once the demands of the upper school and the girls there impact upon her. Already niggling thoughts are darting through her conscious, her mum says that her eyes are beautiful but she does not really like them. Would they look nicer with make up? . . . But I don't wear make up . . . yet. "Louisa we're leaving" resounds through the house, laden with bags and instruments she leaves her room, grabbing the now located book along the way. Into the car she jumps, one uniformed body amongst many, including dogs!! Another school day waits.



"I love chicos"

"I love chicos mucho"

"Hey Jasmine did you see what Amelia wrote on facebook last night?"

"I can't believe how funny maths was today, Al-ge-BRA, LOL"

The playground is a buzz with excited chatter, moving bodies, screeches of laughter at silly, private jokes.

"Have you seen what Paris has done to her hair?"

"How upset was Amber this morning, all because she misses her mum"

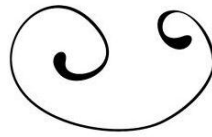
". . . And then *he* just turned to her and said something really mean"

The playground is filled with anxiety and anticipation, fervent discussion, glances that dance to and fro. What makes these girls sad is the fear of not being included; they are shy when around boys and worry about what they think. What makes them happy is their family and friends, a feeling of being part of the group.



She stands in the corner: the Franklin School girl, long, brown or is it blonde hair? She is quite tall but not too tall, has bluey green eyes and her ears pierced. She is happy about her body image but hates her nose (because it is too big), she is happy about her body image but dislikes her hair (because it is frizzy and everyone thinks she's dyed it), she is happy about her body image but hates her spots and freckles, she is happy about her body image but thinks that her bum sticks out

and that her rib cage is too big and noticeable. She loves her eyes though and is happy about her body image.



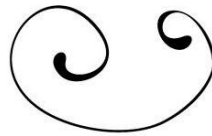
Meet four active girls. Activity allows them the time to think through things thoroughly.

This is a story about . . . Charlotte. She lives on a farm on the outskirts of the city; she absolutely loves her house because it is so big. Some people think she is posh but she just lives in a nice house that's all. Charlotte is 'one of the girls,' most content when laughing with her friends. Boredom is not something to be tolerated, and this is where her active body enters. "Walk on" she orders as she sits atop her horse, hat firmly situated, jodhpurs on. She loves to horse ride and has two horses of her own which she show jumps and competes.

This is a story about . . . India. India thinks that she is a big girl. She is in the gym on the running machine, she doesn't really know why she is running because she is so slow and after a while she gets tired and starts to feel as though she is being watched. Telling herself that she is being paranoid she continues but she is sure that across the gym two girls are watching. They are wearing really skimpy outfits which India doesn't mind because she knows everyone is built differently. But she can't help to wish she was them.

This is a story about . . . Aqua. She is playing tennis with her best friend. They are wearing their everyday tennis clothes which make them look skinny—a white skirt and polo shirt. Aqua is an average looking girl, who is often seen with her blonde wavy hair tied up in a ponytail, she hated the fact that her face wasn't perfect. She is wearing water-proof mascara just in case she sweats—something that she dislikes immensely—and although she is aware of her body pounding the court and her arm swinging ferociously through the air all she can think about is what her boyfriend would think if he saw her now. At that moment she brushes a loose section of hair away from her face to make herself look good.

This is a story about . . . Lottie. Lottie was running on the beach with her boyfriend Tom. She is tanned with long legs and wearing a mini-skirt; a sort of 'half there', mid-riff revealing top that just covers her boobs. She's running because she felt pretty that day and wanted everyone to see her; so what better place than on a hot beach. She's sucking her tummy in even though she is tiny because she has seen a cute guy (even though Tom is there).



These are stories, literary narratives (Markula and Dension 2005), about young women, the young women that attended Franklin School and whom I engaged and interacted with, observed and collaborated with. These are stories that shed light on how the group of girls embodied claims concerning the economic and political investment in young women in late capitalist social order, about how girls now experience ‘new’ possibilities (notably educational and employment based) and about the construction of an apparently “self made subjectivity” (Harris 2004a, p. 6). These are *not* stories free from gender, sexuality, class and race systems, these are *not* finished, complete stories.

Physical cultural studies of this nature, as they are concerned with those girls in positions of opportunity and security, inevitably differ from the qualitative research that has focused in the main on the marginalised, oppressed and/or subversive (Kellner 1997). However, such an exploration of the relocation of power in this instance is seen as a vital contribution in the sense that I intervene upon and into patterns of privilege and the discursive sustenance of certain subject positions. Accordingly, I piece together and attempt to chart questions of dominance, supremacy, ascendancy and the young female body that fits. To avoid these questions altogether is to be complicit with these dynamics (Johnson et al. 2004).

2.5 INTRODUCTIONS: THE STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY

The methodological underpinnings of this project of the physical pay particular attention to the lived, the discursive and the cultural context (Saukko 2003); as such the task of empirical research is to tussle with this interplay. The noun ‘method,’ according to Slack (1996), suggests an orchestration, a rigidity that ignores the interrelated and inseparable nature of methods, theory, analysis and the historical realities of the present that have to be attended. The physical cultural studies conception of methods as ‘practices,’ ‘processes,’ ‘activities’ (Johnson et al. 2004) not only offers an appreciation of the ‘tools’ to be deployed but is furthermore indicative of a ‘trying things out’ approach. There is a sense of borrowing and a (re)articulating (Slack 1996) that reveals a commitment to

adaptation and a move away from the linear and monolithic application of a taken-for-granted epistemological position towards a “creative process of articulating” (Slack 1996, p. 114). If we remain diligent to the desire to embrace interdisciplinarity within our work, if we embrace the comingling of ontology, epistemology theory and method(ology) then we can advance a multiperspectival approach (Kellner 1995) to research. Working with an eye to theory, Kellner (1995) notes that bringing to bear trans- and counter- perspectives allows one to better grasp a phenomenon: a position that seems to maintain relevance when applied to the application of research activities, approaches and strategies.

Once more, qualitative research of this nature is inherently contradictory and in tension as it refrains from ‘operationalising’ paradigmatic prescriptions and the distinct designation of methods (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). My impetus then, my ontological essence, is the quest to make links, uncover, complicate and trouble the lived experiences of human actors as they converge upon and with cultural texts, representations and “the broader political and economic structures of modern industrial societies” (King 2005, p. 23). I borrow therefore from a methodological tool-box (or jewellery box: a deliberately gendered continuation of the metaphor) in an effort to unearth and understand these mediated discourses and localised micropolitical discursive encounters. Further, this multi-method approach is prefigured on the utilisation of research activities that are nuanced rather than concrete, they are those deemed suitable to best enable the project and I embrace a notion of wider theorisation in place of generalisability.

Physical empiricism then, is notable for its diversity not its investment in any form of meta-narrative, as well as its contribution to “conversations that cross the boundaries of race, class, gender and nation and how each instance of qualitative inquiry promotes the development of human agency, resistance and critical consciousness” (Silk 2005, p. 96). The employment of conspicuously qualitative research to glean the personal ‘realities’ of twenty school girls involved working with multiple ‘tools’ and from the perspective of multiple voices/subjectivities/dialogues (Johnson et al. 2004). In view of this Denzin and Lincoln (2003, pp. 4-5) depict that qualitative researchers possess an assemblage of interconnected and interpretive empirical materials that situate them within and make a certain world, a certain site, more visible. These activities, whatever they may be:

transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recording,

and memos to the self . . . hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.

Essentially, the semi structured forms of ‘data’ collection as well as the multiparadigmatic (Denzin and Lincoln 2005) nature of qualitative research was cross cut, in this case, by the foci on the physical, the (in)active body, its representation and the political commitments that are now sprawled over the page and were present throughout our interactions. My detailing of methods—this chapter as a whole in fact—can and should be seen as a tête-à-tête, a conversation that meanders through various guises of theory, participation (a ‘doing of research’), analysis and reflexivity. Up to and commencing from this point, a theory laden dialogue should be regarded as always in a constant state of flux, its presence and impact is unavoidable, this is a voice that never ceases. Theory from here is an ambient noise and the audible conversation is that concerning the *practice* of physical cultural studies research. This discussion especially requires ‘fleshing out’ at this juncture, because it contends with the complexity of the corporeal and hyperreal convergence as it was ‘played out,’ consumed, (re)imagined, distributed, mediated throughout popular culture and experienced throughout school girl culture.

2.5.1 *‘Doing’ Physical Cultural Studies*

A two-part strategy, a doubly articulated research methodology (Livingstone 2007), simply and concisely, obliged a harnessing of partial (popular) cultural representations of the active female body and a theorisation of how they were read onto the body, consumed, resonated and spoke to the lives of those positioned centrally. Put another way, via analyses of the Nintendo Wii game “We Cheer” (see Francombe 2010 and the prologue), in addition to the multiple mediated representations found on the pages of glossy magazines, fitness magazines, internet websites, newspapers, television programmes, books, films, music videos, I apprehended the ways in which these cultural technologies (Ouellette and Hay 2008a, b) elucidated the multiple axes of power that formulate and are read into contemporary forms of physical culture. These readings of the ‘Media Texts’ (Fusco 2006) highlighted the (re)establishment of a particular female subject of the present, these texts are important *now* because they illuminate, shed light on and are (re)produced within very particular historical and social times. Consequently as the texts fold back on and recur throughout culture (Johnson et al. 2004), they provided and brought to the fore key theoretical moments that shaped the other citizen led activities.

Within this method(ological) dialogue however, and based on the specificities of this research endeavour, the excavation of mediated femininity (part one of the two part strategy) was undoubtedly a valuable yet somewhat solitary engagement (Critcher 1971). Therefore—and indeed driven in this instance by the muted voices of protest—these readings of (physical) cultural technologies were thought of as merely the first step. “[T]o change the disruptive impact of these controlling visual representations in multiple ways in educational settings” (Piran et al. 2006, p. 229) required using pedagogic practices that strove to understand girls’ perspectives. This meant offering them the space and opportunity to elaborate on ideas and then supporting them to critique. Owing much to the work of Kimberly Oliver and Rosary Lalik (2001, 2004), I mobilised collaborative, citizen led (Silk and Andrews 2011) activities that articulated lived bodily-experiences and linked them to social realities (Saukko 2003). The ‘corporeal curriculum’ that I instigated was vitally, and unavoidably, flexible, it was influenced by my engagement with the mediated forms mentioned previously and my ontological and axiological aspirations for collaboration, illumination, theorisation, constructive critique and participation (see appendix five).

I presented the weekly meetings to the Franklin School teachers and parents alike as Media and Body Image workshops and in turn this was how the teachers presented them to the girls. The workshops were an optional activity for the girls to attend that ran over the school lunch hour. In each session the introduction and the initial generation of themes was guided and directed by me, however the relaxed and informal nature of the meetings—the girls would arrive giggly and excitedly from their lessons and sit down to a school packed lunch at the beginning of each session—meant that I could intuitively adapt and respond to the girls’ involvement. Our weekly communicative workshops were thematically and topically grounded—although this did change on occasion—and involved the girls participating in tasks often with reference to popular (physical) cultural products. It seems fitting to note that although I, as researcher, provided the Media Texts (Fusco 2006) the decisions regarding which to bring forward and utilise within the workshops was negotiated with the girls themselves. As part of one of the early workshops (13th May 2010 see appendix five) I asked the girls to fill in an information sheet that, amongst other things, asked: Do you read magazines? Which magazines do you read? Do you watch television? Which TV programmes do you watch? Do you watch

films? Which films do you watch? What music do you listen to? Do you have a Wii or any other computer console? Which games do you play?

Whilst these questions elicited a collection of products that provided a stimulus and acted as a catalyst for the conversation and written expressions that followed, it is important to underscore that these meetings were not meant to elucidate or focus on any specific product and its 'effect' on the girls and I do not propose that the analysis and discussion that emerged would be the same had other examples been shown and (re)presentations and interpretations offered. Instead the girls' localised process of negotiation and the appropriation of their subjectivities with, around and through these intertextual technologies was the foci.

The essence was that each workshop moved from the predominance of my researching voice (as I introduced and handed out the task cards) towards a centralising of the girls' as they took part in the tasks and 'chatted' amongst themselves. Additionally, the fostering of a collaborative analytic element to the workshops was facilitated by a period of *Critical Corporeal Closure*, wherein the combined construction of ideas through dialogue (between the girls and them with me) was intended to heighten their critical consciousness. Through problematising their own and the mediated representations they consumed, this 'space' became of paramount importance in terms of the potential for my research to impact upon lives and also in avoiding the possibility of the girls being left to carry the burden of responsibility for their own representation (Fine 1994). Hence, through communicative weekly workshops, focus groups and online blogs, I introduced activities that allowed for an exploration of the (in)determinants in the (re)construction of the 'self' that Gray (1997, p. 100) avouched are "complexly constituted through social, cultural and sexual" subjectivities.

My energies were placed in employing strategies of inquiry that were loosely clustered around a creative approach and related to the contextual character of the girls' embodied experiences. It was hoped that the methodological practices (Johnson et al. 2004) that I initiated and the girls participated in would produce—and here I am utilising Caroline Fusco's formulation (2006, p. 67)—'Body Texts' (see appendix three for a selection) that may have "complied with or disrupted" the 'Media Text' discourses of young femininity. Through the combination and layering of these two 'texts' I sought to harness the ways in

which subjectivities were being (re)produced, (re)positioned and (re)imagined in the girls' adherence, responses and resistances to the representations encountered and the strategies engaged. The 'data' or Body Texts (Fusco 2006) were collected during the communicative weekly workshops that ran over the course of a school term. Each workshop incorporated a number of the methodological strategies outlined below (for a comprehensive that is week by week 'protocol,' see appendix five):

- ❖ Personal Histories/Biographies. I asked each girl to “*tell me all the things that you think it is important for me to know about you*”. These written accounts detailed what they thought it was important that I knew about them (see Figure 2).
- ❖ Personal Maps. Through drawing and visualisation I initiated the creation of personal maps (my own included). These depictions revealed the things that were important to the girls, the activities they liked doing, those they did not, where they did these, how often and who were they with. Prompted by my questions, through coloured images and text the girls could use this task to creatively map their experiences and talk about their lives (see appendix four for a selection).
- ❖ Free Writing (Barbieri 1995, cited by Oliver and Lalik 2001). I was keen to employ a free writing strategy proposed by Barbieri (1995) and utilised by Oliver and Lalik (2001) as a way to engage the body perceptions of the girls. The impetus behind this activity was that the girls wrote responses that were instantaneous; this was an opportunity for them to express whatever came to mind as quickly as possible without censoring words or thoughts. With Oliver and Lalik (2001) I used an opening sentence as a stimulus to probe into what they thought of when they thought about their body (I notice my body most when . . .), their (in)active body (When I am active I feel . . . When I am inactive I feel . . . When I am active my body is . . .) and their possible body (Sometimes I wish my body was . . .).
- ❖ Our weekly workshops were highly intertextual, multi-modal, animated and dynamic as we played “We Cheer,” we read magazines, watched You-Tube videos, drew pictures, wrote narratives and made posters. As a space of mediated engagement, the girls talked and wrote about the images *we* encountered in ways that were at one and the same time complicit with and/or critical of dominant discourses. As mentioned above, the decisions made with regard to the cultural products consumed were based on a repartee and two-way interaction between the girls who informed me about the forms of media they enjoyed and readily

participated in/with or consumed and myself, as I brought the cultural technologies (Ouellette and Hay 2008a, b) to each meeting. The workshops therefore were uniquely and locally sited. Each meeting progressed towards a *Critical Corporeal Closure* with me posing contemplative questions, pushing the girls to imagine other possibilities, to reflect on their comments and offer potential counter-narratives.

- ❖ Online Blogs. In order to reflect the technological moment in which we are historically located I adopted an online platform as an investigative activity. By creating personal, private blogs between me and the girls I created an opportunity in which I could probe further and extend the topics covered in the weekly meetings, furthermore, this was also an opportunity for the girls to ask me questions that they did not feel comfortable to ask in the group scenario. Blurring the lines between interviews and observations these blogs operated simultaneously as E-diaries and continued even after the workshops ceased. Furthermore, they branched out into e-mail correspondence also.
- ❖ Researcher Diary. This was essentially a collection of my own notes, observations, emotions and presuppositions. In specifically referring to it as a diary—as opposed to ‘field notes’—I allude here to the notion that these records were constructed within the diarists’ own frame of reference and I could therefore assume a forgiving, understanding reader for whom there was no need to present a best face (Elliott 1997). Oftentimes done from a distance, from a memory, a mulling over, these moments of the researching ‘self’ can speak in concert with or contradiction to the spoken, transcribed word (Johnson et al. 2004).
- ❖ Focus Groups. Towards the end of my time spent with the girls I carried out three qualitative focus groups. With Johnson et al. (2004) the intention was to discuss emergent themes in perhaps more depth, but certainly in ways that were more vibrant, fast moving, intricate and explorative. Facilitating these focus groups meant a continuous emphasising that it was “acceptable, even desirable for the participants to disagree with each other” (Amis 2005, p. 110) and as such my own participation was notable.
- ❖ Parental Focus Groups. I met with a group of parents—those who opted to—before my research at Franklin School began and during my time with the girls. These meetings were guided by the parents; they ‘brought’ forward their concerns, questions but also responded to each other’s. The climate of these focus groups

was very relaxed and served purposes beyond the accumulation of 'data.' In fact I do not draw on these experiences throughout the thesis, rather they are regarded as part of the wider, ethical and morally sacred (Lincoln and Denzin 2000) sentiments that accompanied this research undertaking.

The advantages of multimethodological qualitative strategies are conceived as being related to the emergence of the numerous ways that the girls can be involved or continue their involvement both within and beyond the workshops. However, at the same time that this allowed for the girls' voices and experiences to be articulated at as many points as possible, it also posed some points for contextualised ethical reflection. Whilst at risk of sounding formulaic (and before advancing the discussion), I want to address particularly the 'researcher-researched' dynamics as they were played out within what turned out to be simultaneously dynamic and existing hierarchical (education based) relationships. I will also consider the ethical impact of virtual methodologies.

As the workshops progressed and I began to develop a friendship-like rapport, with the girls I was mindful of the reciprocal power relations we were embroiled in our interactions and collaborations:

Tom and Herbert (2002) remind us to carefully consider the ethical challenges of deliberately entering into relationships with people to learn more about them. They argue that although the close researcher-research participant relations that develop in participatory research can alleviate power imbalances to some extent, these same relationships can make research participants more vulnerable. For example, participants might reveal more about themselves than they normally would and might feel abandoned if researchers do not take care when leaving the field (Frisby, Reid, Millar and Hoeber 2005, p. 368).

For me, the political dimensions of our participation were brought into particular fruition upon my exiting of Franklin School. This process was certainly mediated by the natural progression of the academic year and the timing of my project which ran until the school 'broke up' for the summer holiday. This also happened to be the end of the girls' education in the middle school as they were moving to the upper school when Franklin School reconvened for the start of the 2011-2012 academic year. As such the end of the workshops and the girls' management of this was tempered by and could be considered as part of a wider re-establishing of their school routine. Additionally, should the girls have

wanted to the online component—that is both the blogs and the opportunity to send me e-mails—remained active.

These e-methodological strategies thus offered a way of maintaining open communication pathways but in ways that were conducive to the directives of the girls (I responded to their emails but refrained from initiating conversations once the workshops had ceased), they allowed for the girls to determine when I fully ‘left the field’ so to speak. Following Hewson (2007, p. 412) it may also be the case that during these online correspondences the girls could determine their own exit as through the online domain they had greater levels of “control over where and when to participate.” Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008, p. 120) note the all-encompassing, omnipresent and importantly popular role of e-technologies and new online communication forms for “[t]eens,” and as such the inclusion of these e-methodologies (Parker 2008) seems pertinent and a valuable addition to contemporary studies. Although the power dynamics and the ethical issues that reside in the context of the virtual world are as, if not more—based on its relative ‘newness’ (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008)—inherent. The combination of online, asynchronous interaction that operated as well as rather than in place of face to face synchronicity in this instance meant that issues of anonymity and visibility, as well as the power of the researcher resonated throughout the project and were, I would suggest ever present. In light of this, and as Frisby et al. (2005) propose the key imperative is for reflexivity and to attempt to keep the decision making and research process as a whole open.

The successful facilitation of the workshops and the drawing to a close of the Media and Body Image project was embedded in my knowledge that the girls trusted each other, had relationships with each other long before my entry into the Franklin School and for some these existing relationships may have even been the basis for their participation (Frisby et al. 2005). These relations thus go beyond and outside my research protocol and ultimately will have influenced, presided over and guided the girls’ disengagement.

2.5.2 Analysis as Dialogue

Texts . . . do not merely refer to the culture of print or the technology of the book, but refer to all those audio, visual, and electronically mediated forms of knowledge that have prompted a radical shift in the production

of knowledge and the ways in which it is received and consumed (Giroux 2004a, p. 67).

The collection of the represented, written, spoken, drawn and imaged that were compiled was formulated upon and resulted from the methodological strategies outlined above. In no way were the practices I deployed or the ‘data’ they delivered precise and orderly. They merely asked questions, raised issues and catechised (in)active physicality. In cultivating a type of physical cultural studies that was sensitive to this multidisciplinary and multipresentational approach, my research activities produced layered, polyvocal cultural texts. This was a dialogic process that fused media analysis with person research as I read into, moved between and worked with these different layers of representation—the textualisation of sensuality, memory, the recordings of the interrogative tasks and their analysis. An intellectual and political commitment to raising and articulating (physical) cultural questions that are allied to issues of power required a comprehensive repertoire of reading.

Far from providing a doctrine or prescription into how to carry out analysis, Richard Johnson and his colleagues (2004) explore how an analysis of this kind can be thought of as a form of contingent dialogues that scrutinise the texts that are at the heart of a contextual inquiry. They ask, for example, for research strategies and analysis that make known and reveal the relations of power found in the most ‘innocent’ of places (throughout the media). This is a process of reading of and for dominance (Johnson et al. 2004; Silk and Andrews 2011). Further, this is a form of analysis that involves a journey through the ruptures and tensions that concern ‘agency’ and its cultural conditions (Johnson et al. 2004). The central suggestion proffered here then, is that in order to “account for and express the experience of living within particular sets of circumstances” (Gray 1997, p. 91) there is a requirement to do justice to the richness of the research. Conversant with Johnson et al. (2004) there are four forms of reading for analysis:

The first reading focuses on an interpretation of the meanings of actors. A second mode of reading involves an analysis of the cultural forms that actors use—or that use them—as a means of organizing meanings and practice in their lives. The third reading involves a fuller analysis, less site or text specific, of the contexts and relations of power and difference and how they delimit the actions and meaning of actors. Finally, there is a reading that focuses on self-production or self-representation (Johnson et al. 2004, p. 227).

Appropriating this and ‘practising’ it with reference to a particular pertinent example—a Radio Four Women’s Hour debate on cosmetic surgery, specifically female breast augmentation—this form of analysis stresses the junctures where readings are concerned with cultural creativity, cultural means, cultural conditions, cultural exchanges and are underscored theoretically. Thus, moments of heavy critique cannot disregard and are indeed anchored to a reading of an “I did it [had a breast enlargement] for me” discourse. With Miller (2001), the task becomes much more about probing into the contemporary nature of gendered discourses as the agency of citizens borders certain structural determinants. This first reading therefore is nestled alongside a second reading in which being sexy and feeling confident were considered as important in the women’s lives. Reading into the cultural forms around which these meanings were being organised might allude to the mobilisation of and engagement in a narrative of idealised femininity that ultimately resulted in a centralising of physicality and its subsequent (bodily) manipulation. Seeking to understand the social conditions within which the power of the feminised, comparative (between females), patriarchal, heteronormative discourses of the sexy, confident, agentic body are located, a third reading would consider how this body ideal articulates the cultural struggles—around gender, sexuality, class and race—of our conjunctural moment. Oscillating and moving between these layers or dialogues I worked to analyse my multi-voiced, multi-produced ‘data’ in such a way. This was ‘data’ that was mediated, consumed, represented and explored and that which was written, spoken, drawn and alluded to by the girls during our workshops. Crucially then, positioned within these readings, these dialogues, is the critical ontology of the researching ‘self’ (Saukko 2003) as gendered, classed, raced, sexed, theoretically informed, partial ‘other.’

The critical paradigm (Markula and Silk 2011) clearly, embraces the concessions and corroborations, the contradictions and contradistinctions that occur within the project itself, the activities deployed and the interpretations forwarded (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). Advancing then an interpretive thrust permitted personal realities to crosscut unique trajectories that are “both micro and macro, institutional and societal, internal and external” (Andrews and Giardina 2008, p. 413).

2.6 INTRODUCING ME: MY RESEARCHING BODY

Advancing a politics of reflexivity problematises a scientific mythology that assumes that the researcher and their story has no impact on the world they engage and in its place attempts to strategically intervene (Grossberg 1992) and locate a self-conscious ‘me moment,’ ‘my body’ in our scholarship. Whether informed by the orientations of the positivist or interpretive paradigms we make choices that direct the scholarly experience we are implicated in and by and these apply to the practical, situational, empirical dimensions of our project. What is more, a physical cultural studies sensibility that is envisaged upon moral and political values, influencing praxis and harnessing double dialogues charges us to “position ourselves as self-conscious, critical, and participatory analysts, engaged but still distant from our informants” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 22). In more pragmatic terms, Gray (1997) relates the role of reflexivity to the researchers’ *impact* on the site or group, the shifting *dynamics* between the researcher and the researched and the *politics* of research, whereas Paula Saukko’s (2003) notion of self reflexive validity recognises the discourses that mediate our experiences. The challenge of reflexivity lies in locating the girls’ voices without hiding behind them,—ventriloquy in Michelle Fine’s (1992) idiom—it becomes about an intermingling of subjectivities, and internal, individualised biographies that ripple throughout interpretations and reporting (Oliver and Lalik 2004). As I occupy a particular positionality, as my body enters the room, the text, I hover in a position of in betweenness (Johnson et al. 2004), conversing with the ‘self,’ as I “revise, critique and reformulate” (Johnson et al. 2004, p. 77) my understanding: a necessary consequence of dialogic methodologies (Silk and Andrews 2011).

As I strive to elicit a project that positions and in some respects peculiarises the body politic of the young female, so *my* researching body is unavoidably situated in a dialectic space: a dialectic body culture. Paying attention to Giardina and Newman’s (2011, p. 49, emphasis in original) demand to “both make use of, and also reflect upon, *how our own bodies frame and are framed by the critical cultural analyses we undertake,*” I offer now the empirical room for a discussion of how my own body, subjectivity, auto-biographical story are intricately interlaced in the research act. I look towards how my concern for my own feminised, heterosexualised, white, middle-class body battled for and against my own intersubjective tensions (Giardina and Newman 2011) and my own bodily preoccupations.

At the same time as I was an ‘outsider’ (Oliver and Lalik 2001), walking into Franklin School every week as a visitor—my body thus marked by the name tag hanging around my neck—I also seemed to trouble the student-teacher binary. Maybe my twenty four year old, slim and fashion conscious body ‘messed’ the girls’ expectations? Encumbered by a convention to address me as ‘Miss’—a reference and embodiment steeped in traditional educational hierarchical connotations—for example, could have impacted my ethical and moral responsibility towards civic and collaborative dialogue. Nevertheless, the axiology of participation was relieved and restored by the girls’ stumbling and hesitancy to address me in this manner. This factor was emphasised further on a specific occasion when they stopped short of, and became embarrassed about talking about breasts, bras, PE kit and the female body when a member of staff accidentally entered our meeting room. Based on the reactions this brought about I was reassured that the girls obviously felt comfortable enough and regarded their relationship with me to be different from the one they shared with their teachers.

With Silk and Andrews (2011), these entanglements and others, of course violated academic neutrality and at times the sanitised empirical, educational, space became contaminated (Giroux 2001b, cited by Silk and Andrews 2011) for instance by my brown high heels! The girls often commented on my ‘style’ and dress during the sessions, asking where I shopped, recalling the outfits they liked and I often found myself pondering and scribbling on paper how my lived body, and the other bodies the girls encountered, were implicating and integral to their lived experiences:

Felicity commented on my shoes today—I said that they were new and the girls said that they liked my ones last week as well. I couldn’t remember which I had worn but they informed me it was my brown heels. Somebody also commented on my necklace. This is interesting with regard to critical methodologies & the reflexive researcher (Norman Denzin’s work) e.g. ME AS EMBODYING WHITE, MIDDLE CLASS, HETERONORMATIVITY working with the ‘norm,’ an interesting milieu of concepts to consider

Research diary entry, 13th May 2010, emphasis in original.

Furthermore, as culturally inscribed, my corporeality was engaged in an embodied intersubjective relationship with the participants (Finlay 2005), I became ‘one of them’ as I seemed to reflect and be complicit with an ‘appropriate’ contemporary female body politic. I ‘entered’ the discourse in subtle but telling ways:

That's what you are like when you are brought up you know what I mean and then there's like *us*

Charlotte, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis.

Moments such as this led to much mulling over my positionality, how did the girls view me and where did they locate me when they talked about femininity? My biography became etched into/onto theirs in ways that were not wholly accurate—most notably with reference to my educational experiences—but appeared to make sense to them. Stepping back from the 'data' I mused over the flashes in our interactions where my fleshy presence was indicated:

My sister she's really, well I think she used to be quite big, and in year four I think, she started losing all her weight and *I was actually then I was the bigger one. And it was just like a bit you wanted to be thin, you know when you just want to be thin [to me]? No you probably don't know that because you're thin* but you just umm, I just sometimes I just wish I was the right size, you know what I mean?

Paris, Focus Group 2, 28th June 2010, my emphasis.

Interestingly, Paris' reaction to my body in this instance not only impacted and made me cognisant of how my physicality was an unavoidable facet of the researching process—I was unquestionably engaged in studying cultures of the body through my bodily practices (Giardina and Newman 2011)—but comments such as this also made me more aware than ever of my own body. They sparked questions over my perceived thinness. In a climate of circulating obeseogenic and anorexic discourses I asked questions of myself, and how my body was being consumed. When I run I feel strong, my legs powerful but as I stand in front of the girls I wonder how my body looks, strong or spindly? Powerful or fragile? Am I too thin? Should I be this thin? Similarly, my white body politic was ferociously realised when I initiated discussions of racialised femininity. The racialised politics of whiteness and my slim body effectively unsettled any prior assumptions that I may have been able in some way to step back from the 'data.'

Foucault (1979) complicates the role and nature of knowledge in terms of the (re)establishment of dominant logics that privilege certain—medical, psychiatric, criminology—'truths.' In light of this, and with reference to the research process,

institutionalised discourses can and should be agitated and folded back upon themselves (Saukko 2003), consequently our accounts should concede incompleteness, partisanship and political dimensions (Frow and Morris 2000). Physical cultural studies, as it is predicated on theorisation, critical reflection, intervention (Silk and Andrews 2011) and compliments the epistemological grounding of a collaborative project (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000), is marked by my readings that are politically motivated. Working within the stimulating territories where physical culture articulates with the female body politic, I was essentially drawn to investigate the issues that I am intrinsically motivated by: the conception of female subjectivity and representation and the intersection between lived experiences and cultural (re)constructions of ‘normalcy.’ As Douglas Foley and Angela Valenzuela (2005) note, it makes little sense to ignore these contextualised and subjective ways of knowing and so they become read into the analysis, the formulation of the text and the way I approached the world (Richardson 2000). In view of Richardson’s (2000) central imaginary, what we say, how we write, edit, interpret and conceptualise the research is a culturally, historically and socially mediated enterprise (McRobbie 1982). This comprehension forged its way into my study, became visible and felt most explicitly when I tussled with the girls’ viewpoints. This is reflected in the prose in my research diary:

I feel apprehensive about actually beginning the analysis. It feels daunting to me. My main concerns are not doing justice to the narratives, these are obviously confusing times for the girls in the workshops & I don't want to lose the essence of their (daily) negotiations. At the same time I am aware that a Ph.D. needs to be written and completed, their words will never have been 'untouched' they are always already being read and interpreted through a myriad of lenses.

Research diary entry, 18th August 2010.

Rendering myself and my motivations available for scrutiny in this way could be envisaged as part of what Fine et al. (2000) engender as a self reflexive critical conscious that asks whether cogitation has been given to “who the researcher would be afraid to see these analyses” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 24) and who is made “vulnerable/responsible or exposed” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 24). The multiplicity offered from permitting these impulses to be heard in our critical dialogues is a central feature of the crystallisation (Richardson 2000) that binds and reiterates the entrenched and ubiquitous power discourses that are fundamental to my ontological, epistemological, methodological

position and impacts upon the questions asked by and of our project (Silk and Andrews 2011).

Throughout this thesis I do not shy away from an authorial style that is both complex and dense as it seeks to describe the conjuncture in which it is written. However, this does not negate nor should it detract from the presence of ‘I-thou’ (Johnson et al. 2004).

2.7 SPEAKING OF QUALITY

If critical inquiries into the physical—those studies that involve ‘doing’ physical cultural studies especially—begin to incorporate, as Silk and Andrews (2011) urge us to, an interrogation of the body-in-context that aligns itself with an interventionist, multimethodological and interdisciplinary agenda, then a reformulation of judgement is required. In instances such as this the quality criteria must be sympathetic to the perpetual state of flux that research that originates from these ontological and axiological positions comprehends. Simply put, as I was guided by the political, ethical and moral sensibilities of the collaborative project outlined thus far and as I locate the evolving socio-economic, socio-technological, socio-political landscape, I envisage that my *contribution* be ‘judged’ on the basis of its reciprocity, nonmaleficence and ‘interpretive sufficiency’ (Amis and Silk 2008; Silk and Andrews 2011), not *tested* against some preconceived and science-laden formula:

Quality then becomes *internalized* within the underlying research philosophy rather than being something to be tested at the completion of the research or an outcome of the application of robust methods (Amis and Silk 2008, p. 458, emphasis in original).

How we conceive a qualitative investigation, and how we conduct research on, with and for girls, therefore strikes at the central proponent of the issue of ‘quality’ research. The emergent positions that strive for a perspicacity of quality are likely impeded by a lack of consensus; Rolfe (2006) establishes that the methodological and theoretical uncertainty of qualitative research, its non-unification, makes it near on impossible to form any accordance when judging quality. However, the ways in which the physical cultural studies project precludes this desire and effort to impose and designate its boundaries has been advanced throughout this chapter, such that the inability to proceduralise and thus not *test*,

in the conventional sense of the word, is lauded (Kincheloe 2001). As a result the notion of quality forwarded is that “each research methodology (and perhaps each individual study) must be appraised on its own merits” (Rolfe 2006, p. 310).

In their comprehensive outline of the philosophy and politics of quality in qualitative research, Amis and Silk (2008) situate their discussion of research quality as inseparable from the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research project. Research motivations, obligations and benefits are resultantly intimately tied to wider political implications (Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton 2001), my commitment to the girls and the conditions of the historical present (Kincheloe 2001), thus presenting an alternative connection “between ethics and rigor” (Harrison et al. 2001, p. 342) and impacting on our preoccupations with validity. Linking epistemological groundings and issues of quality, I adapt and abbreviate Amis and Silk’s (2008) assessment of research quality on the basis that it not only provides an overview of the on-going and burgeoning conversations within the field and alludes to the influence of the political and institutional contexts within these debates—and within which research takes place—but it also allows me to situate my thesis and how I intend it to be ‘judged.’ Their discussion then is ostensibly coordinated around three research orientations: a *foundationalist* approach that is firmly located in what I contend to be an impossible quest to uncover an object reality. The main determinants of quality in this sense are internal and external validity, reliability, objectivity and generalisability. Departing from this orientation, *quasi-foundationalist* researchers offer an alternative to the search for an objective reality by advocating for an approximation of reality that is situated. Although locating reflexivity as a determinant of quality research, this trajectory can still be critiqued for trying to make qualitative methods fit “into a procrustean bed of objectivist standards of reliability and validity” (Harrison et al. 2001, p. 324). Compelled by a move away from realism, *nonfoundationalists* note that “there can be no theory-free knowledge and thus relativism is inevitable” (Amis and Silk 2008, p. 457). Grounded in ethical and moral concerns, quality, in this instance, becomes internalised within the research philosophy rather than something testable upon completion.

Following Kincheloe (2001, p. 689), my work is located within an institutional and political context in which “the rigor of research intensifies at the same time [as] the boundaries of knowledge production are stretched.” I contend and am mindful of the requirements of academic publishing and institutional constraints therefore when I

maintain that the ‘accepted’ standards of the *quasi-foundational* approach are, of course, important in as much as the quality of my research is, and should be, dependent upon the application of appropriate strategies of inquiry. As suggested by Smith and Hodgkinson (2005) in doing so, and focusing quality in this manner, I may have gone some way in uncovering a partial and situated approximation of the reality of the girls’ lived experiences. Further, I am aware of, engaged with and interested in the emergent *nonfoundationalist* quality criteria. In this regard I am attentive of the demand for this thesis to produce *credible* and *trustworthy* findings that contribute to knowledge, but I am inclined to propose, as Amis and Silk (2008) do, that this can and should sit alongside the requirement for my work to serve the interest of those who are researched and for their voice, and the democratic, moral ethics of the project to be vocalised at as many points in the Ph.D. project as a whole. Consequently, and in surmising my expectations for ‘judgment,’ this thesis straddles the *quasi* and *nonfoundational* research orientations, the essence however, is that I expect my work to be held to multiple standards of quality, the central one being that it contributes to the sensibilities of the physical cultural studies project taken up in this chapter.

Cultural studies has to be, as a consequence of the unstable field it addresses and in which it operates, concerned less with issues of precision in formula and calculation (unless, of course, the question being asked requires one to turn to formula) than with questions of its values and the responsibility it assumes for its effects as a veritable, and internally and externally contested, site of cultural and political production (Robbins 2009, p. 431).

The generation of theory, the application of ‘methods’ and the ‘assessment of quality’ are marked by the political—and institutional—conditions that shape the social sphere. The *mise en scene*—as it originates from Thatcherite/New Labour ideologies of self-responsibility—articulates a dispensatory prerequisite with measuring, setting targets, monitoring and it is within this climate that our research and our bodies are managed.

3. GOVERNING GIRLHOOD: THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT

[T]here is no question of the body, its health, its wellness, no question of biology, disease or physical well-being that is not also a political issue (Hook 2004, p. 247).

Within this chapter I inquire into culture and render visible the political. I strive to interrogate the social as the primary terrain for the articulation of power and in doing so I forward a discussion of society and the way it manifests “concrete examples of how politics is expressed, lived and experienced” (Giroux 2000, p. 62). As was outlined in the methodology, this thesis is grounded in the multiple realities of physical cultural studies, and so this chapter is reflective of a commitment to stake out the political field, however difficult, chaotic and confused this may be as well as a commitment to intervene upon and theorise the way in which culture is being lived and experienced by the girls (McRobbie 1997a). Having an interest in everyday experiences tasks us to probe into the cultural and political moorings of today and to explore the temporal and spatial conditions and relations of power in which subject positions are discursively constituted (Robbins 2009). For this reason, this chapter operates as a contextual charting of our present circumstance.

Through a Foucauldian lens, I set out the conceptual boundaries and locate the body as it enters political conscious and rhetoric. Furthermore, as I rework the ‘data’ and usher forth my understandings, I draw heavily on the work of Rose (1989), Hook (2004), Best and Kellner (1991), Giroux (2000) and Harris (2004a) and their insights into the constitutive relations of power, the economy, the body and femininity. Given that this chapter interrogates the conjuncture, and in doing so maps out the cultural and theoretical underpinnings of the thesis, I do not apologise for the balance that favours the theoretical, nor for the foray of material relations I draw on (be that the written and/or spoken of the girls, current political leaders, alongside examples from television, magazines, advertisements and the computer game “We Cheer”), as I feel that in the interest of augmenting certain public struggles the sense of ‘scene setting’ that this affords is a necessary component of the project that follows.

3.1 FOUCAULT, BIOPOLITICS & 'NORMALISATION'

From a concern with death, discipline, punishment and torture through moral reform, social 'norms' and dividing practices (Foucault 1982; Milchman and Rosenberg 2005), Michel Foucault critiqued our historical era and problematised "modern forms of knowledge, rationality, social institutions, and subjectivity that seem natural but are contingent sociohistorical constructions of power and domination" (Best and Kellner 1991, p. 34). Offering what is a polymorphous account of the evolving technologies of power within a society of transformation, the body retained a pivotal position, indeed Prakash (1982) notes that the move away from punishment and pain—as public spectacles—and towards a body that was 'useful,' productive and docile can be mapped onto the emergence of capitalism and the resultant 'new' issues of the body. Via capillary like, diffuse technologies of governance Foucault's expositions referred to a pluralising control and the emergence, transformation and (preliminary) examination of power throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Evans 2010). In particular the investigation of the management of life, health, well-being and its concomitancy with 'truth,' power and subjectivity—as conceived by the state—resonates today and is, according to Rabinow and Rose (2003), more enigmatic than ever.

Elaborating on this 'modern' form of power in terms of a biopolitical trajectory (Cole 1993) or "a plane of actuality" (Rabinow and Rose 2003, p. 3), Foucault's project focused on the control, manipulation and responsibility of/for life in contemporary Western societies (Hook 2004). Within this context, the anatomo-political (Milchman and Rosenberg 2005) interests that rest upon the micro-politics of the body (Fusco 2006) adjoin with the macro-surveillance of the populous. The scope therefore, of the biopolitical is unwavering as technologies of knowledge (Carabine 2007) and the production of power work to order life processes (Holmer Nadesan 2008) and attend to the nuances of the governance of whole populations on the one hand whilst simultaneously calling upon the individualised sculpting of the subjectivities of the populous (Walkerdine 2003). The possibilities of biopower are realised through "the various technologies through which not just the behavior [sic] of individuals is regulated, but through which life, itself, in all its dimensions, is subjected to the exercise of power" (Milchman and Rosenberg 2005, pp. 335-336).

Human action; human life, is made comprehensible by measurement and predictability, its peculiarities are monitored, judged, recorded and corrected (Best and Kellner 1991; Hook 2004). No trip to the doctors—whatever the complaint or ailment may be—is now complete without your weight and height being recorded and/or without you being asked numerous questions with regard to your lifestyle habits: do you smoke? How many units of alcohol do you consume weekly? If, as Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p. 196) proclaim, biopower spreads “under the banner of making people healthy and protecting them” then one is left to question the apparently intransigent conception of what it means to be healthy and which bodies are worth protecting? The biopolitical constitution of the subject becomes that of an individual who is able to constantly refashion or re-style the ‘self’ (Evans et al. 2008) in the quest for compliance to some preconceived ideals of what could be termed *bionormality*. The overriding focus for Foucault was the ensuing ways in which individuals and their bodies were/are therefore classified and excluded according to pervasive ‘normalising’ strategies that designate, moderate, objectify (and subjectify) the ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Best and Kellner 1991; Foucault 1982; Fusco 2006). The discursive construction of *bionormality*—against which this recording and transcribing of the physical can take place—gains momentum and credence as a dividing practice (Foucault 1982) on the basis of scientific claims to knowledge and expertise (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Nikolas Rose (1989) cites that the criterion of ‘normality’ is thus formulated according to the moral topographies of the population. In this sense an image of conformity and ‘normality’ along the lines of the ‘natural,’ and acceptable was fostered and apparent when the girls talked about themselves. Of note in this extract is the reduction to the aesthetic features of young femininity that emerged as I questioned Roxy with regards to the ‘normal’ image that she conjured:

Roxy I want to be thinner but then I also want everyone to just say like, I don’t want to them to think umm, I’m ugly or really pretty. I know that sounds like weird because obviously like everyone wants to be like really pretty, but I just want them to all think that she’s *normal*

Me What is normal?

Roxy I don't know, but not like, not different to everyone else. Like not ugly, not ridiculously ugly, umm like, not really pretty, not necessarily pretty, but just like average normal

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010, my emphasis.

The notion of 'normality' entered the girls' discourse readily and while they juggled with an apparent awareness that it held consequences for those individuals being 'othered' they often referred to "the normal one" (Charlotte, Workshop 5, 27th May 2010) and distinguished between females on the basis of "someone who looks normal" (Joanna, Workshop 3, 13th May 2010). Moreover, and fascinatingly, the ideal of 'normality' was situated within what Gonick (2004) terms the push and pull of individual and collective selfhood. Roxy, for example, manoeuvred and maintained her subjectivity within an entanglement of valuations to do with her desire to be conventionally pretty without standing outside the parameters of acceptable social recognition (Gonick 2004). Progressing from the semantic and relational utilisation of the word 'normal,' 'normality' was also determined and being conjured along disciplinary, hierarchical and mechanistic lines that facilitated the production of 'normative' judgements. Arising as part of a magazine exploration task, Roxy invoked the body and its fleshy figuration as it produced and excluded the 'normal' from the pathological. Through her selection of 'the ideal' image Roxy manoeuvred and distinguished the 'normal' from the 'nice' and 'natural,' the healthy from the unhealthy:

She just was generally like a normal person, not that, not really skinny but not fat and, um, everything was just on averagely nice

Roxy, Workshop 4, 20th May 2010.

A multidimensional discourse of 'normality' penetrated the girls' everyday dialogue as a valuation, a will to 'truth,' knowledge (Best and Kellner 1991) and a technology of power concerned with the preservation of a certain type of life (Hook 2004). Within the biopolitical formations of youth and our present societal 'crisis' with body weight (Lee and Motzkau 2011) we see new interventions established upon a 'normalisation' that consists not only of a "judgement about what is desirable, but an injunction as to a goal to be achieved" (Rose 1989, p. 131). As a case in point, a preoccupation with the obese and

anorexic young body now populates the social conscious and discourses of the 'normal' and 'abnormal' are reinforced for example, via the monitoring of body mass index and the pseudo expertise purported from television programmes such as *Super Size versus Super Skinny Kids* (Channel 4, my emphasis). 'Normality,' in this sense holds much wider implications for the "encompassing regime of bio-power" (Hook 2004, p. 248) that is bent on governing society under the ascendancy of a body politic, a governance that 'normalises,' controls, directs but also makes healthy, productive and enterprising (Fusco 2006).

Lee and Motzkau (2011) highlight that governments have long been concerned with biopolitics and with the centralisation of the population as the "terrain of government par excellence" (Rose 1980, p. 5). As the population enters political thought (Cole 1993), governments have become reliant upon more subtle forms of state intervention:

The term governmentality sought to draw attention to a certain way of thinking and acting embodied in all those attempts to know and to govern the wealth, health and happiness of populations. Foucault argued that, since the eighteenth century, this way of reflecting upon power and seeking to render it operable had achieved pre-eminence over other forms of political power (Rose and Miller 1992, p. 174).

Accordingly, Rabinow and Rose (2003) note that we are talking about the variety of 'truth discourses,' the array of authorities and the strategies, products, practices and techniques that contour the corpus and forms of life (Rose 1999); pulling together the anatomopolitics (Milchman and Rosenberg 2005) of the human body and the biopolitics of the population (Rabinow and Rose 2003). For Hook (2004), Foucault loosens the notion of government pointing instead towards the multiple modes of lower-order micro-political forms that support the broad macro imperatives of the state. The conditions that have paved the way for these new rationalities based on the personalisation of the care of the physical 'self' may be attributable to the reinvention and re-engineering of the welfare state (Isin 1998) towards what Foucault offered in his 1978-1979 lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, as a more neoliberal governmentality (Hamann 2009).

3.2 NEOLIBERALISM & PUBLIC PEDAGOGY: “WE SEE IT IN REALITY AND THEN YOU SEE IT LIKE ON TV SHOWS”

Foucault’s later work has discernable implications for those of us seeking to understand the neoliberal realities of the present. Through the directed analysis of power, knowledge and the body, Foucault (2008 [1978-1979]) offered a characteristic of governance in terms of it being an art of ‘intervention,’ ‘vigilance’ and the management of ‘truth’ and the market. Made possible by a nexus of apparatuses, technologies and techniques that are multiple and multifaceted, this form of neoliberal governance centralises the individual and in particular their body and bodily practices, it is underscored by hypercommercialised, hyperglobalised market dynamics and it complicates the public/private consumption of morals, ethics, values and the politicised sculpting of subjectivities. Taking this forward, I open this section with the following four extracts from the collaborative workshops as I feel they are emblematic of the cultural present. I refer back to them in what follows as they are lived experiences that are a sign of the context within which this study is located:

She doesn’t really make an effort you know?

Lucy, Workshop 5, 27th May 2010.

No. we didn’t loose [sic] 800 cal and the man became thin. But was fun

Alexia, Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

Alexia *It’s saying* that you have to have legs that are like this big

Monique Very thin thighs

Amelia *Like you Monique*

Monique No I don’t

Workshop 2, 6th May 2010, my emphasis.

Lucy *So does that mean that people with small boobs aren't allowed to play on them?*

Kate [laughing] No it means that people that are that skinny shouldn't have big boobs

[move from squad makeover to dressing room]

Lottie Oh she's really pretty

Me What were you saying about boobs just now?

Lottie That they've all got really big boobs

Aqua And they've all got really high boobs

Lucy They're not saggy

Me They are saggy?

Lucy They're not, it's like they are perfect

Aqua They are really tight

Me Tight?

Aqua Tight

Lucy Oh my god I was reading in a magazine this girl had 32H size boobs

Roxy Yeah yeah yeah I read that too that magazine, Shout

Lucy I'm not joking by 15

Roxy And when she was 7 she had to get a B cup

Lucy And she keeps getting teased and she can't do sport cause her
 boobs are too big

Roxy I read that yesterday

Workshop 3, 13th May 2010, my emphasis.

Historically, the contemporary moment is imagined on an epochal shift in the role of the state “from authoritarian government to individual responsibility; from injunction to expert advice; and from centralized government to quasi-governmental agencies and the media” (Sender 2006, p. 135). Neoliberalism “is not rendered intelligible by counterposing a non-interventionist to an interventionist state” (Rose and Miller 1992, p. 199), it is not about less government, or different state intervention, but rather about this aforementioned shift to governance (Isin 1998; Navarro 2007). This is a shift wherein there develops a new emphasis on the responsabilisation of individuals and the emergence of techniques, technologies, and apparatuses that facilitate an interchange between the macro and micro—the technologies of subjectivity and the technologies of the self (Hook 2004; Isin 1998). The central contention of this style of government is that the social landscape is conducive to the formation of *Homo economicus*: a “free and autonomous “atom” of self interest who is fully responsible for navigating the social realm” (Hamann 2009, p. 38), assuming market values (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck 2003; Peck and Ticknell 2002; Sheller and Urry 2003) and bolstering the consumer-citizen ethos. Simply put by Giroux (2000, 2001a, c, 2003a, b, 2004a, b, 2005), neoliberalism’s facilitative conditions are tantamount to the death of the social, the ascendancy of de-regulationist policies (McRobbie 2008) and the birth of a culture of surveillance and cynicism; a culture whereby neoliberal ‘normality’ is celebrated and those disconsolate ‘other’ bodies are sanctioned for their inability to invest in the capitalist regime, blamed for society’s ills and pathologised as immoral (McMurria 2008).

The power of the free market (Bullen, Kenway and Hay 2000) and the emergence of a regime intent on governing at a distance (Rose and Miller 1992) forges a blurring between the private and the public as well as the personal and the political (Hamann 2009) such that “new conceptual systems have been formulated for calculating human capacities and conduct” (Rose 1989, p. 8). In much the same way that Rose (1989) articulates the new languages that are utilised to speak human subjectivity and its political pertinence into

being, so the current British coalition government talk(ed) in “different words” that mean(t) “the same thing” (Nick Clegg in the Telegraph 2010) about Britain’s Big Society. As a telling exemplar of the calculated assemblage of human technologies enabling individual action from a centralised, governmental core,—neoliberalism in action—the coalition’s (Conservative-Liberal Democrat) Big Society agenda sets out to move:

From state power to people power . . . From big government to the big society . . . It's not government abdicating its role, it is government changing its role . . . Let me tell you what I believe. *It will be the doers and grafters, the inventors and the entrepreneurs who get this economy going* . . . breaking apart the old system with a massive transfer of power, from the state to citizens, politicians to people, government to society. That is the power shift this country needs today . . . And let me tell you why we desperately need this change. *It's because the old way, of just pouring money into public services from on high, didn't make the difference it promised to* . . . This is the reform our public services need. From top-down to bottom-up. From state power to people power. The big society spirit blasting through (David Cameron 2010, my emphasis).

Cameron’s key note address at the Conservative party conference in 2010 is steeped in neoliberal rhetoric that posits the cumbersome state that stands opposed to a free market (Robbins 2009). He is fostering an autonomous people politics that individualises and responsabilises the subject whose citizenship is now dependant on their active engagement (Rose and Miller 1992), they are not “captive to the circumstances of their birth” (Cameron 2010). So, in a time of what Giroux (2004a, p. 77) terms “rapacious global capitalism,” and alongside the introduction of privatisation, competition and market driven reform (Isin 1998), I draw upon an evocation of the newly instated ‘Big citizen:’ one who is incentivised to become an entrepreneur of the ‘self’ (Rose and Miller 1992), a citizen-subject who intervenes in the burdens of society and enters the cultural field as an active agent with reciprocal obligations to those they encounter (Fusco 2006; Robbins 2009). Operating now at the local level of intervention, overarching social policy agendas are effectively handed over to individuals and are all the while muddled and clouded by the demands of the market and—as Giroux (2004a) urges us to remember—they are always connected to larger, social and collective conditions and forces that often mark off, stigmatise and scrutinise those abject and deviant bodies in terms of a ‘normalised’ body politic (Rich and Miah 2009; Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008).

Contemporary politics engineers a configuration between governmental rationalities and personal enterprise and initiative leaving those marginalised subjects as victims of their own private circumstance. The wider political composition set as it is on individualisation and responsabilisation is made known at the level of citizenry through the expression of ‘choice’ and directed action. Considering Lucy’s comment that opens this discussion, the impression presented is that it is a female’s ‘choice’ not to engage in the pursuits of pleasure found in the logics of the market (Giroux 2003a), they have no-one or nothing to blame for their apparent failures and misgivings but themselves (Hamann 2009; Rich 2005).

Governance then, entails the maintenance, direction and creation of a regulated ‘freedom’ in which individuals conduct themselves in a manner that appears freely chosen but is at the same time in allegiance with the shifting agenda of authorities and the multiple implications of the economy (Rose and Miller 1992). The power inter-dependencies between subject formation and the political, cultural and economic are founded upon the neoliberal state’s minimum interventionist agenda (Fusco 2006; Robbins 2009) and as such statements of ‘truth’ and directives for the management of everyday life, are (re)worked and (re)produced by apparatuses, techniques and technologies of governance. These are the “concepts, rules, authorities, procedures, methods and techniques” (Rose 1989, p. 466) through which subjectivities are sculpted and understanding is garnered:

Government is a domain of strategies, techniques and procedures through which different forces seek to render problems operable, and by means of which a multitude of connections are established between the aspirations of authorities and the activities of individuals and group. These heterogeneous mechanisms we term technologies of government. It is through technologies that political rationalities and the programmes of government that articulate them become capable of deployment (Rose and Miller 1992, p. 183).

Central to the possibility of this form of governance is knowledge and expertise: the realisation and consumption of discourses that oblige us to perform as the model neoliberal citizen. So, as the state restructures itself it becomes ever more reliant on a self-surveying, self-policing, self-motivated citizenry whose constitutive knowledge concerning the ‘correct,’ ‘proper’ and meaningful conduct of human life relies on technologies of governance. Perhaps one of the most pertinent illustrations of this reconfiguration is through our purchasing practices and consumption of the expertise offered to us in films,

television programmes, self-help books, magazines, video games, on the radio and in our leisure pursuits. In making claims to ‘truth’ about the body politic (Fusco 2006) these cultural technologies (Ouellette and Hay 2008a, b) influence and (re)produce meaning and understanding about subjects and subjectivities (Giroux 2002) and, following Peck and Tickell (2002, p. 384), they construct and consolidate “neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations.” Visual technologies and mediated forms of governance speak to this conception and are literally shot through with representational politics (Giroux 2003b) that become known via a neoliberal ethic of consumption-instruction. Culture therefore plays a significant role in the formation of power (Robbins 2009) especially where it is located around, and concerned with, the discursive construction of ‘normalcy.’

The dynamism of the amalgamated techniques of governance that recognise and express the biopolitical harness a pedagogical cultural function (Giroux 2000), to this end they can be—and have been—conceptualised as ‘educators’ (Leonard 2009; Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo 2009; O’Riordan 2007), or ‘portable professors’ (Freeman 2005) that work as forms of public pedagogy (Giroux 2004a), as ‘instructional technologies’ (Hayes 2007), or even as ‘edutainment’ (Dijick 2006) teaching about ‘appropriate,’ ‘normalised’ bodily conduct and form. The tussle between the educative and the entertaining was encapsulated in Alexia’s (Workshop 3, 13th May 2010) remark when she performed the “We Cheer” workout. From her comments it is possible to interpret that it is on occasions such as this, as the ‘informative’ or ‘instructional’ diffuses into the fun and amusing, that the insipid, ubiquitous, pervasive and therefore troubling nature of popular culture emanates.

Further, the girls’ dialogue—when addressed towards femininity—coalesced around their own body as they experienced it day-to-day and their concomitant surveying of the mediated body. Charlotte’s (Focus group 3, 29th June 2010) affirmation—from which the title for this sub-section is derived—that “like we see it in reality and then you see it like on TV shows” brings to light that these are discursive technologies that, when critiqued, intervened upon and opened for intellectual engagement (Giroux 2000), elucidate the nuanced power of culture to represent and discriminate and it reiterates Giroux’s (2000) formulation that culture cannot be separated from politics. The political can be seen to operate in dispersed ways and through the power of representation issues of gender,

(hetero)sexiness, class, race, become intertwined and are given legitimacy. From this formation, culture performs a pedagogic function (Giroux 2000) that shapes the fabric of experience:

It is now well recognised that pedagogical activity can no longer be considered as confined to contexts of formal learning (e.g. school or colleges) but instead occurs within many other socio-political and cultural sites, such as families, churches, mosques, amongst peers, and via sites of popular and consumer culture (i.e. the messages transmitted through TV, film, newspapers and magazines, etc.) often credentialed by media figures claiming particular expertise (e.g. around diet, exercise and health) (Rich 2010, p. 14).

The ‘instructional’ or ‘educational’ force of popular culture was felt when the girls discussed “We Cheer” and ‘Shout’ (a glossy magazine that they read). Amongst the girls’ dialogue, particularly those snippets presented previously, there are some telling moments in which the ‘game’ is afforded an authority and a power to intervene in ways that oscillate with wider biopolitical orientations that become inscribed on the body of the girls. ‘Conventional’ and hierarchically produced knowledge of the female body, its contours and its physicality were affectively (re)affirmed and sanctioned (Giroux 2004a) as the visual and—in the case of “We Cheer”—kinaesthetic offered ways of knowing that were invested, privatised and personalised, for example, to Monique’s thin legs. Furthermore, as biopower disciplines and dominates along ‘normalised’ lines (Milchman and Rosenberg 2005), a public pedagogy of ‘appropriate’ breast size and appearance permitted a dialogue of inclusion and exclusion, the acceptable and unacceptable around boobs that are “saggy,” “tight” and “high” and related them to and considered them favourable to certain body sizes. As a biopolitical neoliberal ethos of dissolved public and welfare matters manifested itself through popular cultural forms—now considered as technologies of governance—and onto the body of the girls it seems vital to interrogate the types of knowledge, the body pedagogies (Evans et al. 2008; Rich 2010), that are being (re)produced under these cultural conditions. The politics of the state weld to a politics of the person (Hook 2004) and are tempered by the pedagogical forces that establish the young female body within a system of ‘truth’ (Rose 1989), pertaining to its deportment, behaviour, demeanour and performance. For Hamann (2009, p. 42), the political climate of the present day makes clear a rationality of the *Homo economicus* as a form of subjectivity that is “brought into being and maintained through social mechanisms of subjectification.” The essence being that through apparatuses of government the ‘self’ is (re)produced in

ways that denote ‘choice’ and free-will but are at the same time encoded, conditioned and conducive to the state’s conceptions (Hamann 2009).

3.3 THE FEMALE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT

So far I have drawn transiently on the girls’ lived experiences in order to flesh out, that is provide glimpses into and of the ‘lived’ accounts of/about/around, the epoch. By specifically locating the significance of these narratives being in relation to, and originating from, the young girl, the links—that have, in a crafted sense, only been alluded to so far—between the biopolitical and the neoliberal need to be, and can be, reiterated and conceptualised further. Consequently, I now want to expand the counter layering of ‘freedom’ and independence (e.g. we participate in a seemingly autonomous manner but to what extent is this dictated to by the state?) both through an explicit discussion of the postfeminist sentiment that proliferates our politics of the present and, perhaps in a more anatomico-political (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2005) sense, through delving into the intimate management and sculpting of the ‘self’ in which the girls partook.

Before I forward the discussion though, I recognise a need to make visible where and how these moments are situated within the politics and history of feminisms and the implications entailed for the writing of girls’ experiences. I do so as a means of framing my feminist ‘self’ but also as an acknowledgement that what follows is reflective of the contradictions in feminisms and the post-structuralist uptake of terminology. What is more the highlighting, recognition and examination of the historicity of feminisms throughout academic discourse, public rhetoric and popular culture as well as the politicisation of terminology such as ‘agency’ and ‘choice’ becomes then a “fruitful avenue for [feminist] theory and practice” (Reid and Frisby 2008, p. 101). This is about a feminist politics that is uniquely situated, articulated and silenced, it becomes about connecting theoretical perspectives to the realm of the aesthetic and social (Giroux 2001a). Mindful of Reid and Frisby (2008, p. 94), I strive at this point to locate myself, the girls and their silences within the “highly theorised forms of feminism.”

The internal (that is between feminist scholars) politics with regard to the utility of the first wave, second wave, third wave descriptors, an emergent postfeminism and the associated connotations of these are well documented (Braithwaite 2002; Caudwell 2011,

McRobbie 2009) and rife with discrepancies, ambiguities and differing points of interest. I tender that as feminist narratives of progression—for example the social activism of the third wave as “growing out of and containing some elements of second-wave feminist analyses and political understandings” (Braithwaite 2002, p. 336)—contend with the conflicts between culture, power, pleasure, social change: the personal and political (Braithwaite 2002), so a language to talk and write about the young girls’ lives we engage is imbued with these contradictions too. Through my discussion of postfeminism as a cultural sentiment and the tensions that are manifest in the girls’ experiences—a point exemplified by my exploration of the gaze and subjectivity—this chapter undoubtedly touches on and skirts the edges of many ongoing debates within feminist scholarship, principally as my positionality and theorising out troubles the linearity and generationally-led shifts in feminism (Caudwell 2011). However, I am not necessarily arguing here for a reconciliation of these differences within feminisms or the lives we describe, “my concern is rather with how assumptions about . . . [these] feminist way[s] of understanding and analyzing the world continue to be at work in interpretations of contemporary feminisms often without being acknowledged” (Braithwaite 2002, p. 342).

So, whereas I deploy a language that may, at some times and by some (feminist) academics be seen to imply an uncritiqued, ‘pre-gendered, -classed, -raced’ subject I am also conscious of the convergence of feminist viewpoints and the positionings of girlhood that I engage. Simply through advancing a ‘sculpting’ metaphor I indubitably enter this conflicted theoretical field. Evoking the dialogue between Alison Jones (1997) and Bronwyn Davies (1997), and deliberately not taking sides, perhaps then the ‘sculpting’ that I note in my theorising of the girls’ lived experiences is best understood in **their** “taking up of tools” but where “the very taking up is enabled by the tool lying there” (Butler 1990 [1999, 2006], p. 145). The malleability and ‘work to be done’ that I envisage through a turn to the sculpting of subjectivities—the need or desire to return and ‘resculpt’—as well as a notion of the “‘self’ as a verb” (Davies 1997, p. 274), are thus regarded from such post-structural understandings as an “ongoing discursive practice” (Jones 1997, p. 267) and I extend this reasoning to my utilisation of ‘choice’ and (re)constitute throughout this prose. I am, therefore, not suggesting that the girl (or subject) is invisible, or inaudible or ‘wrong’ when they express ‘choice’ and ‘freedom,’ instead I point to, and my feminist praxis is heedful of, the discursive practices engaged and the cultural conditions within which they exist (Jones 1997).

From here I am conscious of and attentive to Jones' (1997) and Davies' (1997) discussion of pos-structural feminist theory and the implications this can have for the language we utilise as we 'record' and write about the girls our research encounters. As a result, and as noted in my methodology, language and the writing of experiences—this thesis—is fraught with contradictions and tensions and should be regarded as a performative (feminist) politics in itself (Giroux 2001a). Therefore, located within the shifting terrain of subjective and social relations and determinants, my feminist politics looks to intervene into inequalities and politicise the present. My critique and research directives are promulgated around and focused upon a cultural rhetoric that creates what I consider to be inequitable and unbalanced power relations and positions from which to speak and be heard. Cultural creativity and subjective experiences are not denied; instead the conditions that enable or limit these expressions become the site for interrogation.

3.3.1 The Cultural Politics of Girlhood

As relations between the state and its citizens have shifted away from state building towards a form of individualisation, so Gonick (2004) locates the changing, complicated and complex possibilities of a distinctively feminine subjectivity. Not dissimilar to the participants in Gonick's (2004) study, the Franklin School girls formulated and (re)articulated their gendered subjectivities via a 'knowledge' of femininity that was underpinned by the discursive formations and social constructions of 'girlhood' in late capitalist Western societies. Rose (1982) contends that children have for a long time, and in a variety of ways, been linked to the wider projects and responsibilities of the state and taking this forward it is argued that it is girls and young women in particular that are the subject of governmentality (see the many contributions in Harris 2004b). Many scholars explicate and offer important ways to theorise contemporary girlhood, power and politics, referring to a "blending of a kind of individualized feminism with neoliberalism" (Harris 2004a, p. 185) in which the girl is heavily invested. In fact Anita Harris' (2004a, b) work is suggestive of the integral role(s) and position(s) that young women have taken up in relation to the social and economic prosperity and the future of our society (Azzarito 2010).

As the vanguard of a strikingly neoliberal, biopolitical subjectivity young females have thus been celebrated and their 'progress' made discernible over recent years, providing

what appears on the face of it as a striking move away from previous gender inequalities that have plagued female subject formation. The apparent new visibility of young girls has been attributed to many interrelated developments and changing social conditions, notably the way in which the work of feminist movements to eliminate the gendered barriers around education and employment, to reform legislation and to transform attitudes regarding the personal domain, border the “socioeconomic need for young women to take up places in the new economy” (Harris 2004a, p. 7). Moreover, and guided by Harris (2004a), education and employment have become appropriated as markers of female success and are increasingly endowed as a key component in the upholding of a middle class female’s choice biography (Brannen and Nilsen 2005) that is no longer sustainable through marriage alone. “These changes have enabled the current generation of young women to see themselves, and to be seen, as enjoying new ‘freedoms’ and opportunities,” (Harris 2004a, p. 8) what is troubling though is that this is representative of the few, not the many. Harris (2004a) opines that it is the daughters of wealthy parents—like those attending Franklin School—that become the “postergirls” (p. 48), the hallmark of a have-it-all femininity and they are implicated in a fictional storyline that this is an achievable reality for all. Based on her school experiences Paris (Focus group 2, 28th June 2010) talks of girls who have “got everything, you’ve got everything or nothing, you’re pretty, smart, sporty.”

The nature of ‘freedom’ has previously been discussed, but here I want to bolster this by incorporating the centrality of consumptive practices and the marketisation of youth as being intimately tied to the way we make sense of this expression of ‘choice’ and autonomy. Girls, as now educated and employable, are also reliant upon and concurrently shaping the market; their engagement makes sense in terms of its dialogicality, that is, as the disposable income of young women increases they are harnessed as an important consumer group but “the image of successful, individualized girlhood itself is one of the most profitable products being sold to them and others” (Harris 2004a, p. 20). Afforded with a ‘freedom’ to consume becomes conflated with and supports the neoliberal, depoliticised remit of the state premised upon consumption equalling certain forms of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjectivity. Through the purchasing of material possessions the active, ‘worthwhile,’ productive consumer citizen, those hardworking people who make the correct consumptive ‘choices,’ are praised and held up as a model subject. As a result the

practices of consumption become representative of the person and part of the crafting and perpetuation of a selected 'self:'

- Me Why is clothing important?
- Charlotte Because it can make you look really, really stupid
- Lottie Yeah some people look so bad in some outfits
- Me So what's stupid? At the moment, like?
- Lottie You want to steer clear of white leggings altogether, they look ridiculous
- Me [jokingly] Can I just say be careful what you say because I have clothes on which you might say look stupid [laughter]
- Lottie No you always look nice
- Me So white leggings?
- Lottie Yeah
- Me Anything else? Why white leggings?
- Lottie Cause [sic] they are really, really unflattering
- Kate Also I'm starting to see those, sorry if anybody has them, those leggings with rips in
- Lottie Oh yeah
- Kate Why would you buy them with rips in? It just looks stupid
- Charlotte I think it would look fine as long as you can make the outfit around it

As the opportunities for the crafting of a neoliberal archetype become increasingly numerous and readily available, so the pertinence of the market is established and the individuals relation to the state read through their purchasing power. Citizenship of this kind is therefore seen as self-directed, depoliticised and devoid of any ethical or democratic referent (Giroux 2004a), it is also gendered through the established stereotype of the female consumer that is now comprehensible and personally sustainable through the aforesaid current ‘over achievement’ of girls in education and employment. Contending with this, it is possible to reason that Western neoliberalism engages feminised discourses in which the young girl’s body can be seen as the “metonymic location for many” (Duits and van Zoonen 2006, p. 114) economic, political, social and cultural struggles. Once more our understanding of the context is littered with contradictions; notions of autonomy and self-directed behaviours are situated alongside the surveillance of the female body and the vilification of those who make the ‘wrong choices’ (Gill 2007a, b; Rich 2005). Even for those endowed with the capacity to spend, this pathway to self-realisation is a source of constant anxiety about “getting it wrong” (Smith Maguire and Stanway 2008, p. 63). The young girls experienced the demands of consumerism within their daily lifestyles (Arthurs 2003) and through their attendance to and questioning of their decisions about what to wear “on the day” and their critique of their attire—“why did I buy that?”—Paris, India and Eva’s exchange is indicative of the risks and ambiguity surrounding their ‘freedom’ to shop:

- Eva My mum’s always sorting my wardrobe, she’s like ‘ohh are you ever going to wear this. Are you ever going to wear that?’
- Paris That’s what my mum does, I buy things and I never wear them
- Eva I never know what I am going to wear, I like to decide what I am going to wear on the day
- India My mum has a right go at me, she found a tag which is from a year ago and I haven’t worn it

- Paris Like I go to the shops and I buy something and I think ohh I'm going to wear that, but I only wear it once ever and then I'm thinking why did I buy that?
- Eva I buy something and then I wear it all the time and then I buy something else and I wear it all the time but it's just, cause [sic], it goes like that and you leave all the stuff back

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

The conjoining, inseparability and characterisation of a neoliberal governance of subjectivity that commodifies the consumer-citizen's relation specifically to the body and 'self' (Arthurs 2003), together with an appreciation of how this speaks to feminism and the young female's utilisation or resistance to various feminist discourses (Rich 2005), points to an aperture in which a schematic of popular feminism emerges. Young girls have not simply become the target of neoliberal market ethics but this can be viewed as being directly related to a circulating postfeminist address directed at females through commodification, consumption and the media—it should be said that this is an incontrovertibly (hetero)sexualised, racialised and able-bodied mode of address. Standing at the border of global power relations and an individualised feminism (Azzarito 2010; Harris 2004a), the girl is increasingly made known by her bodily property (Gill 2007a) and her performance of femininity over and above anything else. The importance of the aesthetic 'self' was exposed at many points during my interaction with the girls, but on one specific occasion it was made quite plain. I made a note of this conversation in my researcher diary:

Before Session: In corridor I asked Lottie how her exam went last week. She mentioned that they had gone well but that she had been unsuccessful in terms of getting a scholarship (she looked quite upset). Aqua responded by saying something along the lines of "it doesn't matter at least you're pretty"

Research diary extract, 13th May 2010.

What is more the media, and the glamorous celebrities that populate it, trade in this "pseudoliberal new consumerism" (Harris 2004a, p. 19) and are characterised by the (hetero)sexy and generalising logics and imperatives of a postfeminist sensibility (Gill

2009). Worryingly, it is the female celebrity body that is often regarded as a source of power and knowledge. For the girls these bodies were considered as a marker of femininity worthy of appropriation:

Like, there's one thing that, like, classifies beauty. You know there is one look, you can't be sort of, you can't look a certain way to be pretty, there is one way like all celebrities kind of look the same ish [sic].

Aqua, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

The perpetuation of one body type emerged at times such as this as a standard of homogenised physical perfection, this mannequin (Gill 2007a) served as a form of postfeminist symbolic violence (McRobbie 2004b) capable of rendering difference invisible and offering space for the critique and stigmatisation of girls who might be, for example, “a little bit chubby” (Lottie, Workshop 7, 16th June 2010). As a populist discourse, the postfeminist subtext that undercuts films, magazines, television programmes, advertisements and the associated merchandise, as well as high street products (I am thinking here in terms of ‘playfulness’ of the FCUK acronym for French Connection, and the playboy bunny that indicates an ‘up for it femininity’) proposes a discourse of autonomy and self-realisation that allows females to feel as if they are unrestrained by social barriers and constraints. But as Amy-Chinn (2006) gives emphasis to, these arguments often fail to contend with the extent to which discourses of femininity are founded upon a restrictive and already arrived at ‘normality.’

With this in mind it is perhaps not surprising that the terminology and avail of postfeminism is not without its problems, its moments of ambiguity and a sense of complication. Throughout scholarly and popular circles there are various and numerous conceptualisations of feminism that in many ways denote different meanings. In the(ir) packaging and negotiating of the narratives of female experience that are offered through discourses of individualism, autonomy and resistance, the postfeminist generation are thought to have benefited “from the women’s movement through expanded access to employment and education and new family arrangements” (Aronson 2003, p. 904). Feminism and feminist concerns are then held in a seemingly redundant and responded to position, quite simply in this formulation, feminism has been rendered with a sense of closure, it is gone, it is past, it is obsolete. For McRobbie (2004a, b, 2008) this celebration

of the girl who is thought to be active through her participation in appropriate consumer practices refers to an undermining of previous feminist gains. Her argument is that “post feminism positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasise that it is no longer needed, it is a spent force” (McRobbie 2004a, p.4). Significantly, we see an academic dialogue engaged in the problematical disentanglement of female subjectivity in neoliberal times. The topics at stake include, but are not restricted to, notions of culture, agency, structure and voice and are often related, if not reduced to female sexuality.

Noting that postfeminism has transpired as one of the most influential and disputed terms for feminist cultural studies, Rosalind Gill (2007b) highlights that there exists little consensus with regard to how it is best understood. Rather than seeing postfeminism as a theory, historical shift, epistemological and/or analytic perspective or as a form of ‘new,’ reworked or even dismantled feminism, Gill incorporates the neoliberal (re)constitution of female subjectivity—especially as it focuses on the body—with the consumer and media infused contemporaneous social landscape and articulates postfeminism as a cultural sentiment. From this point onwards I take as my lead the proclamations of Gill’s postfeminist sentiment that comprises a number of related themes:

These include the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence of ideas about natural sex difference; a marked sexualisation of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference (Gill 2007b, p. 149).

Importantly, these “themes coexist with, and are structured by, stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to ‘race’ and ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and disability as well as gender” (Gill 2007b, p. 149). The connectedness of the postfeminist sensibility and neoliberalism is then epitomised by the synchronal dynamics of ‘choice’ and power whereby girls’ and young women’s appeal to autonomy is grasped by pointing to their false consciousness (a cultural dupe), discounting this ‘voice’ and expression and/or in its place privileging a cultural understanding of the patriarchal and late capitalist ideas that may impinge upon these experiences (Duits and van Zoonen 2007). As part of the *Critical Corporeal Closure* that was incorporated into our workshop on ‘Normative

Magazine Discourse' I questioned the girls about the perceived power and cultural value of products such as the magazines they had been exploring and tellingly this offered an insight into the ways in which the swing of the 'agency pendulum' could be read into the narratives of the girls (Gill 2007c, cited by Evans, Riley and Shankar 2010a):

- Me Do you find . . . when you look at these images in magazines
 does it make you think about your body?
- Monique Yeah yeah
- Me And do you think a lot of other girls think about their bodies?
- Group Yeah
- Me What do you think they are thinking when they are reading them
 and seeing these bodies?
- Monique That they should be like this and have, like that small a waist,
 and be that height, and have that hair and stuff
- Aqua And guys see pictures of models everywhere and that's what
 they think the perfect woman is and and it is not

Workshop 4, 20th May 2010.

The movement and sway of power and the disparate responses to and tolerance of the 'structural' and 'agentic' sparked an academic debate that took place within the pages of the *European Journal of Woman's Studies* between Duits and van Zoonen (2006, 2007) and Rosalind Gill (2007a). As a précis, the dialogue was centred around Duits and van Zoonen's utilisation of the terms 'agency,' 'autonomy' and 'choice' and their subsequent "analytical purchase on the complex lived experience of girls and young women's lives in postfeminist, neoliberal societies" (Gill 2007a, p. 73). Gill (2007a) does not deny that young women and girls make 'choices' about what to wear, what to play with, how to act, how to dance and move but she notes that they experience in culturally specific contexts. The 'choices' that are there to be made are not "socially and culturally dislocated" (Gill 2007a, p. 73). Bearing this in mind, I am interested and take issue to interrogate not the

‘choice’ that was made, or the words that were spoken, but rather how this ‘sits’ within a culture that ‘normalises’ that discursive practice or discourse. In returning once more to the cultural products, cultural technologies (Ouellette and Hay 2008a, b), that are symptomatic of today’s social landscape, the assemblage of these divergent theoretical viewpoints can be, quite literally, played out (and with) through the “hip alterity of the Bratz doll line” (Guerrero 2008, p. 186). This is a range of ‘toys’—malleable bodies (see Figure 3)—that paradoxically invest in the race, gender and sex politics of identity construction and point to the commodification of subjectivity (see Guerrero 2008). Thus, layering the theoretical upon the materiality afforded by the Bratz collection, young girls may feel that they are ‘choosing,’ freely and independently to prioritise looking *hot* over how well they are performing in sports—a strap line and the representation of active femininity that is offered to them when they buy in to the Bratz Sportz brand—but the point of departure for scholars such as Gill (2007a, b, 2008) and McRobbie (2004a) would be how/why this has come to be a normative requirement for many young women in the West? Providing an impression of postfeminist media and consumer culture (Gill 2007a), each doll carries descriptors which are of a similar sensibility: “It’s not just a game—*it’s how good you look winning it!* Stand back ‘cuz the Bratz are rockin’ their all-time favorite [sic] sports and *showing the world that it’s not just about how you play, but about how hot you look when you win!*” (my emphasis) and “Leave it to the Bratz to prove that being a princess doesn’t have to mean Cinderella and a glass slipper. In today’s world, being a princess is all about livin’ it up like a lady while still rockin’ a rebellious attitude. *It’s a celebration of independence, and it’s all about lookin’ and feelin’ good!*” (my emphasis).

Figure 3. Image of the Bratz Sportz range of toys. Available from: <http://www.shopping.com/MGA-Entertainment-Bratz-Sportz-Soccer-Yasmin-Doll/info> [Accessed 1st June 2011].

The challenge for research (and the researcher) is to be positioned within these competing discourses, contending firstly with how girls are being drawn into participation in certain practices and activities as a requirement of 'normative' postfeminist femininity (McRobbie 2008) and secondly with how the girls themselves, and their respective experiences, illuminate or compete with the culturally and theoretically bound interpretations offered to us. That is, our projects must engage in, not shy away from and not privilege one discourse or standpoint over the other, rather they should speak to these debates, alluding to the theorisation of female lived experience as it is played out in one specific moment, one context at one time.

The appropriation of this 'can-do' (Harris 2004a) femininity is not wholesale however, it is not only deprived of heterogeneity in its address to a particular body politic, it is also buffered by the older, long-established and engrained perspectives of growing up as a girl. The everyday lives of the school girls illuminated disjunctures wherein old discourses of femininity coincided and ran through these 'new' notions of girlhood. Specifically, young female subjectivities were bound by a combination of 'traditional' and 'new' concepts (Harris 2004a). Through a situated discussion of the postfeminist sentiment articulating around the sporting or active body that populates school PE, Emma Rich (2005, 2004) makes a particular effort to explore the multiple subject positions held by young women who are at the cusp of the advantages heralded by neoliberalism. Whilst Rich's (2005) trajectory is focused on the discourses of feminism and their appropriation as part of a gendered identity, it is important to carry forward her critical approach to the ways in which "young women in contemporary society may be negotiating discourses of gender, the self and discourses of equality in often multiple and contradictory ways" (Rich 2005, p. 496). With Rich (2005), and within the girls' narratives, it was possible to contemplate the ways and the spaces in which traditional femininity and gender expectations were juggled in alliance with individualised cultural inflections. As the girls sculpted a sense of 'self' it became apparent, there is still a case to be made, still a necessity to ask or force the question "[m]ight girls emerge as individuals only to be further implicated in patriarchal traditions and relations?" (Gonick 2004, p. 207). So, continuing along a thematic exploration of the active body as it intersects with femininity, and drawing on 'data' in which these two discourses manoeuvre in contra, Roxy, Aqua and Lottie related to each other as knowing subjects (Rich 2004):

Roxy You're actually being sexist because, like obviously I am as well. Cause [sic] we think, we think that hockey because like we see women with muscles, we think it's a manly game and then we see men playing it more

Aqua I think it's just that guys do more sport generally, they can take it to higher levels because women have to have like kids and everything they can't do that

Roxy But then like netball we think like only girls can play that, but I mean, I suppose boys don't [inaudible]

Lottie They play basketball

Aqua They don't want to play either

Roxy But then, like, cricket, Mr Whilts, our own teacher, just because he's like the head of boys cricket he was just like 'I think it's so wrong girls playing cricket it's just so wrong' and he said that in front of everyone. And then he was just like 'right I want you, all the boys, I want you to write why girls shouldn't be playing cricket'

Aqua That's rubbish

Roxy And half of the boys were like saying 'we don't care that girls get to play cricket'

Lottie Oh Grant thought it was awesome, he thought it was the height of cool for girls

Aqua Joe now wants girls to play rugby

Lottie Ohh?

Aqua In bikinis

Lottie In bikinis?

Aqua Yes in bikinis, well preferably nothing but, I told him he might
be going a bit far there

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

The girls challenged the ‘traditional’ segregation of sports according to gender in ways that were indicative of the neoliberal-inspired empowered and responsible female. However, in doing so they drew heavily on discourses of troublesome individualism and ‘normalised’ femininity: in rationalising the construction of gendered sports the girls could be viewed as being doubly positioned with regard to the status quo. Whilst they were complicit on the one hand, they also made attempts to actively resist and challenge the inequalities they perceived in their own stereotyping and they took issue with a teacher’s assumptions of them as active young women. The school girls were negotiating the gendered expectations placed on their active bodies in similar ways to that presented in Rich’s (2005 p. 495) work, whereby “the young women were negotiating their lives around gendered dynamics” and “they were also constructing a narrative wherein they described gender inequality as a thing of the past.” Perhaps this offers an explanation for the complicated and often contradictory ways the girls positioned themselves “within and against these key discourses” (Rich 2005, p. 497). For these middle-upper class girls there was a definite need not to be duped by the market, their accumulated success and the presentation of a rounded personality (Harris 2004a; McLeod 2001) required them to appear in a certain way but also acknowledge that they know they are being charged with such expectations:

We want and feel like we should look like them

Ruby, Workshop 8, 1st July 2010, my emphasis.

Following Rich (2004, 2005) and Arthurs (2003), the crux of this sort of interaction was the mobilisation of explicitly individualised and consumer oriented cultural discourses as a form of resistance rather than apprehending the contradictions that prevail around a ‘freedom’ and ‘agency’ that appears impinged upon notions of surveillance. The PE scenario mentioned previously brings this to light in terms of the surveillance of the rugby playing bikini body that was desirable to the male connoisseur. In spite of many of the existing paradoxes, the girls presented themselves in ways that elicited self-control and

self-determination and at the same time they are being presented, charged and addressed in a manner that compliments their middle-upper class knowing and their media savviness. Through the fixation, enumeration and rumination of the body property (Gill 2007b), neoliberal ideologies about ‘choice’ become linked with a distorted, conflicting and ultimately messy kind of postfeminism that implies that it has in some way “‘come true’, that white women are no longer subject to any kind of domination or disciplinary power” (Gill 2007a, p. 74). Following Gill (2007a), and from the discussion above, the bodies of young girls are in fact subject to more demands and power struggles than ever, and the responsibility for the sculpting of this narrower subjectivity is reserved as a personal enterprise.

3.4 SCULPTING SUBJECTIVITIES: (PHYSICAL) CULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES & THE BODY

Power resides and condenses at key moments, key sites of cultural interest (McRobbie 1997b) and in ways that are contingent upon the conceptual and ideological functions of the state. To this point I have discussed and developed the nature of the political and economic context in neoliberal biopolitical terms, from a wider concern with the productivity of the market towards a notion of the female ‘can-do’ girl as the ideal subject (Harris 2004a). What has perhaps been neglected so far is the investment, management and incitement of the ‘self’ to become a certain type of citizen, the requisite to forge a relation between the personalised performance of personhood—how does an individual want to be recognised?—and the ‘normative’ requirements and judgements of those they surround themselves with (Rose 1989). The intricate and enigmatic making or sculpting of subjectivities then, is a vital caveat for governing at a distance, and it is to this that I now turn, remaining mindful of the contextual mapping (the technologies of subjectivity) that all the while underscore the experiences and narratives of the body that are told (the technologies of the self).

The operation of power, as has been outlined thus far, functions around its attachment to the everyday life of citizen-subjects (Foucault 1982; Rose and Miller 1992). According to Foucault (1982, p. 781) power “categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him.” As an agent imbued with

‘choices’ and with decisions to make the feminised neoliberal citizen plays an active role in the sculpting of their subjectivity. Ultimately ‘choice,’ as a formation of political struggle, has replaced more overt forms of discipline (Isin 1998) and as a consequence governance reveals itself through the “delicate and minute infiltration of the ambitions of regulation into the very interior of our existence and experience as subjects” (Rose 1989, pp. 10-11). This is regarded by Rose (1989, 1996a, b) as a government of subjectivity that acts in an indirect manner, in a manner that appears to be administered by the individual, to conduct the conduct of the population. The notion of conduct discerns an appreciation that it is at once the leading of others and at the same time a “way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities” (Foucault 1982, p. 789). The female social body (Fusco 2006) is conducted through technologies of subjectivity and the self (Rose 1989) to perform and be responsible for their individual feminine duties. For Lottie the neoliberal era took on a temporal and spatial dimension as she worked on the ‘self’ in her bedroom before school:

Well I get up and then I spend ages brushing my hair because I quite like my hair it’s all nice and silky and I love my hair basically. And umm yeah, so I spend ages and ages brushing my hair and I take, I don’t take very long to get dressed, like I hate home clothes days because it’s so scary and everyone’s judging you and I’m like, oh my god am I wearing the right thing? I wore the wrong thing one home clothes day it was like oh why did I wear this? It was the worst thing

Lottie, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

The girls were able, through their consumption practices and immersion in/with the ‘arts of subjectivity,’ (Rose 1989) to engage in a continuous cycle of conducting themselves in relation to the performance of ‘appropriate’ femininity. This was a pretty femininity and not one that went beyond the boundaries of acceptability and respectability:

Me So do you think the boys have got, is there a specific type of?

Charlotte It’s like hot, it’s only hot people not pretty people

Monique They don’t notice how beautiful they are

Felicity She is so pretty

Me	What's the difference between hot and pretty?
Jasmine	[hot is] Blonde, skinny, big boobs
Stephie	Pretty is like nice legs
Charlotte	Pretty is like pretty, not interested in boys, like kind of like, you know what I mean? And then hot is like big boobs, kind of slutty but not slutty, you know what I mean?
Monique	Big boobs, skinny you know?
Stephie	Yeah the boys go for a slightly slutty look

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

Under the auspices of Derek Hook (2004) the (re)constitution of a feminine subjectivity via novel, esoteric and subtle apparatus of governance need to not only be highlighted but queried, doubted and considered. In the extended citation that follows the 'we' summoned is the female subject who is enabled and constrained by the construction of subjectivity (Rose 1996) and as such 'we'/'I' must question:

How do we come to understand, to repair, to improve or to know ourselves? What concepts, what mechanisms and or tools, what kinds of 'expert knowledge' do we use to this end? Where, or from whom, do these knowledges and/or procedures come? How do they come to insert themselves as vital components in how we know ourselves, and vital objects in how we practice ourselves? How do they become the principles according to which we govern ourselves? (Hook 2004, p. 270)

Advancing the previous analyses of the neoliberal retrenchment of social welfare,—its aggressive diminution that sits alongside the expansion of institutions (the media) that 'do the work of the state'—drawing together and building on the groundings offered from the Foucauldian understandings of subjectivation, the discourses of femininity that the girls utilised, the circulatory techniques for the distribution of knowledge and the governance of the pretty and attractive 'self' (Hook 2004), the discussion is now concerned with the mediated discursive constitution of normality. In light of the growing concerns over

global health care, or specifically rising obesity levels (Campbell 2003; Crawford 2002; James et al. 2001; Prentice and Jebb 1995), I return now to my previous deliberation of body weight and youth. I do so in order to firstly flesh out the ‘normalising’ and utterly pedagogical—that is educational and instructive—capacity of physical cultural technologies (Giroux 2004a) and secondly to clarify and provide an illustration of the manner in which the conceptual notions that inform this thesis are entwined and experienced with specific reference to Hook’s (2004) citation deployed previously. Exploding the boundaries of fun and entertainment and instead placing these apparatuses as composite and congealing fortresses, as discursive spaces and/or resources (Evans 2010) situated firmly within our political, technological, and social context, provides an awareness of the fundamental divisions in society along (bio)powerful lines of differentiation (Silk and Andrews 2011).

In the game “We Cheer” (see prologue) the body is not simply a display of prevalent femininity, it is a display of the responsible neoliberal citizen whose body is representative of (t)he(i)r ability to invest in the capitalist regime and exist independently. As subjectivities are fostered and fashioned, the cultural (digital) currency distinguishes between the socially powerful ‘norm’ and the body of the ‘other.’ For those bodies that do not ‘fit’ a visit to the calorie-busting workout mode is required; by replacing the winning of cheer points with the losing of calories, “We Cheer” locates the incentive for reinvention with the individual. The aim is to get into shape and mould a body that is conducive to the standards of the feminised corporeconomicus—a reinscription of the homo economicus according to a focus on the female flesh, muscle, skin, sinews that are pervasive across the media. As Charlotte and Lottie note this is a body that is “really skinny, well like TV people” (Charlotte, Workshop 2, 6th May 2010) and “most girls want a magazine body because that is what celebrities are” (Lottie, Workshop 4, 20th May 2010)—that is (re)constituted in the interactive technological discourse of computer games and the television. Instilled with a subjectivising body discourse, this ‘optional’ (you ‘choose’ to partake) element of the game appears to become a ‘requirement’ of conformity, a mechanism of sculpting and a means of conducting the corpus. During the final workshop (see appendices two and five) the girls produced posters that summarised their engagement with “We Cheer” and provoked them to make connections between these experiences and the discussions during each workshop’s *Critical Corporeal Closure*. Charlotte’s response is indicative of the digital and real converging upon her physical

subjectivity in a way that makes her evaluate her own body and elicits her wish to be “alot [sic] thinner:”

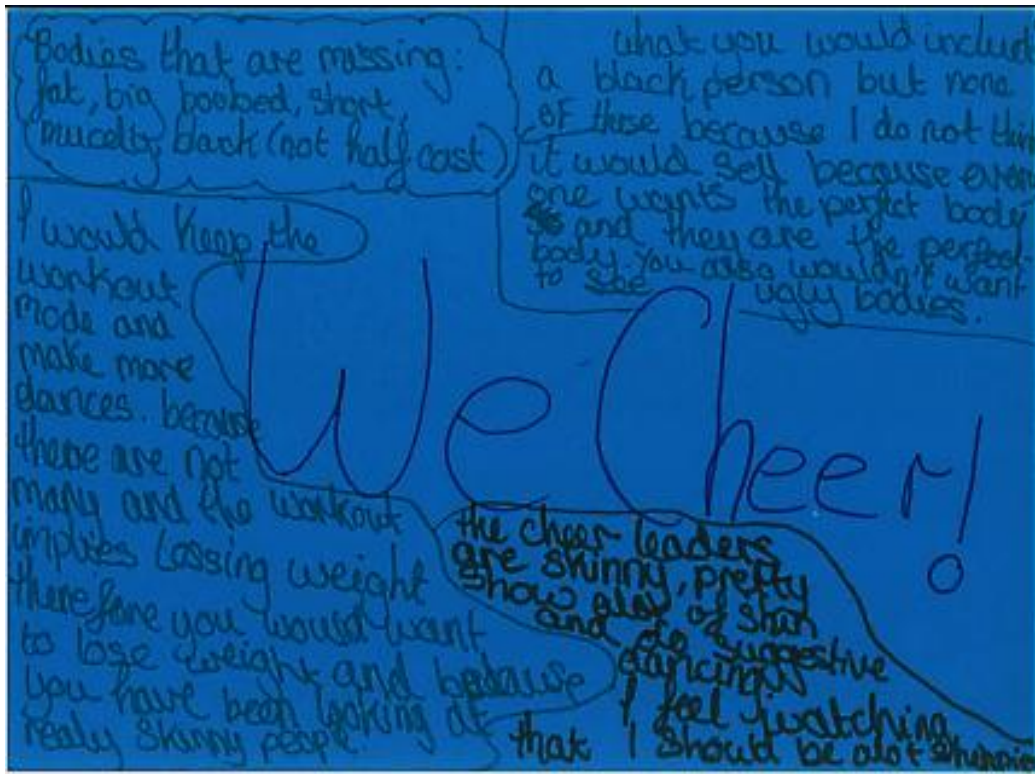


Figure 4. Charlotte's "We Cheer" Critique Poster. Workshop 8, 1st July 2010.

Through her embodied position as the digital cheerleader, the corporeal girl becomes the workout instructor fully equipped with calorie counter and a digital figure that highlights the area of the body being exercised. Embedded with notions of the governance, teaching and learning of/about the body, the expert is met by an abject ‘other’ looking for help (Lewis 2007). In what turns out to be an almost shocking display of ‘us and them’ the blonde, slim, (hetero)sexually powerful figure of the cheerleader meets an array of neoliberalism’s disposable populous: in one instance, to which the girls are referring below, an obese male:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Kate | Oh my god [upon seeing the obese male appear on the screen] |
| Lottie | Why is he so fat? |
| Lucy | [singing] Fatty fatty bom bom |
| Lottie | Eeww he’s sweating |

Aqua Urrg he's got moobs [man boobs]

Kate I think that's a bit harsh having a fat person asking to, doing the exercise

Lucy [repeating aloud the game's audio in a mocking & tearful way]
I'm not good at doing things by myself

Me It's quite explicit isn't it?

Group Yep

Lottie She's tiny compared to him

...

Kate Why's she? why's she? That makes people think they, why does she need to do a work out? She is already [makes a noise as if sucking in her stomach to show that she thinks the cheerleader is already thin]

Aqua To keep her taut

Kate Yeah but she's tiny

Aqua Yeah but you still need to, like, keep the muscle

Kate She hasn't got any muscle

Aqua Yes she does

Nina Oh my gosh I feel so sorry for the fat man he's so slow

Lucy Do I have to do the moves?

Me You're supposed to be squatting . . . yeah copy them

Roxy	So they actually get you to work out?
Me	Yep you are doing a work out
Aqua	Is the second person being the fat man?
Robin	[who is currently playing as the second person] I hope not
Lottie	One of you guys is the fat one, the fat guy, and the other one is the thinner
Lucy	I'm the thinner

Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

Difference then is digitally experienced, mediated and embodied as social subjects are articulated in ways that construct and shape relations. The flabby 'other' body was negotiated and apprehended as being low in self confidence, defeated and a figure of fun (Gill 2008) and empathy, while Kate also questioned why the slim body of the cheerleader needed to "do a workout." Utilising distinctly neoliberal language Aqua responds by drawing attention to the need for continuous body alterations, implying that there is always *work to do*. The subject is never a complete project, even when slim the expectation and 'normalising' judgements, according to Aqua, demand that the individual will still conduct themselves in an 'appropriate' manner and work on the body to keep it "taut" and to "keep the muscle." In this matrix of power, knowledge and expertise "We Cheer" can put into action the macro biopolitical agendas (Macleod, Raco and Ward 2003; Rose 2000a, b) on health, obesity, physical activity and ultimately 'normality' via work-out modes and the explicit implementation of techniques for the care of the 'self' (Rose 1989). The material relations of power as they "constitute the very subjectivity of the subject" (Bartky 1990, p. 79), work by "linking texts to contexts, ideology to specific relations of power and political projects to existing social formations" (Giroux 2000, p. 354). Whilst conscious of the dividing practices at work, the girls on the whole observed that the inclusion of the workout was:

It's quite good that they have a workout mode though

Kate, Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

If you loose [sic] all those calories I'm going to do it

Alexia, Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

Why is there a fat person asking to learn to exercise! . . . Good that you actually get to work out!

Roxy, Workout mode observation task, 13th May 2010.

Good that they have a workout mode although could be argued against! . . . bit harsh having a fat man to do work out

Kate, Workout mode observation task, 13th May 2010.

Furthermore, when discussing the UK reality television programme Super Size versus Super Skinny (Channel 4) in which the bodyweight binary is revealed, contested and made to change through a diet swap, the girls' conversation supported and articulated the programmes of government that render problems such as obesity controllable through individual action:

And I think if you're the larger person and you're watching it you'd feel a bit, you'd feel a bit upset cause [sic]. It's not like something that you want to watch you know, you don't have to watch it *but it's for their benefit if you know what I mean?*

Paris, Workshop 5, 27th May 2010, my emphasis.

Subsequently, neoliberal politics places an emphasis on discourses of responsabilisation and individual accountability that are not dislocated or disassociated from a power that functions to (re)construct a particular form of productive, efficient feminine subjectivity (Fusco 2006). The participation of a supposedly 'free' citizen (Milchman and Rosenberg 2005), aligned with what has been outlined as a market oriented, competition driven and socially insecure (Hamann 2009) political ideology offers up an intricate and manifold

examination of the productive and restrictive nature of power. That is, the capability of power to (re)produce individuals who maintain that their participation is autonomous and self-chosen yet this ‘freedom’—to exercise our subjectivity for example—often draws on “the values, norms and ideas already set in place by broader structures of government” (Hook 2004, p. 266) or is only comprehensible by a retreat back to these ‘norms’ and criteria (Rose 1989). If, as Hook (2004) has suggested, biopower is the manifestation of neoliberalism on the body, then the body becomes representative of, and links together subjectivities that are politically and economically produced and intertwined with state formulations. These technologies of the body refer to the incentivised individual who inspects themselves against a prevailing standard imposed by others (Hook 2004) and the sculpting of an ‘appropriate’ subjectivity is therefore about the transformation and policing of the ‘self’ (Fusco 2006). It is through, what could be described as panoptic technologies (Fusco 2006) that Milchman and Rosenberg (2005) trace the novelty of Foucault’s governmentality.

Utilising the architectural formation of the panopticon, power dynamics are thought to be internalised by the subject, this involves a monitoring and turning in upon one’s ‘self’ (Hook 2004) which, as Roxy’s comment suggested, infers the contradictions of ‘freedom’ and ‘choice:’

I think it’s more, like actually yourself thinking it . . . I think that it is more, like, yourself that you’re trying to impress. Because then like if you impress yourself you think you’ll impress everyone else

Roxy, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Interestingly, Roxy points to an investment in the ‘self’ but also implies a benchmark to which this is *assessed* as being ‘correct’ or not: “everyone else.” The neoliberal subject thus exercises a disciplinary, ‘normalising’ power on themselves, they work on themselves in an attempt to avoid being thought of as the individual who “if they made an effort they would be ok but they just . . .” (Paris, Workshop 5, 27th May 2010). Reading into the silence, there is the suggestion that non-conformity can just as easily be recognised and those that fall short of engaging in self-regulative practices are ‘othered’ and “stigmatized as failing themselves and their fellow citizens for failing to take up, and be responsible to their duties” (Fusco 2006, p. 75). The rhetoric of effort, in this sense, operates as a

depoliticising tool that fails to attend to the “inequitable social structures which have an impact on” (Rich 2005, p. 502) females’ lives. The girls themselves were particularly dutiful to the maintenance and preoccupation of their bodies as manifestly feminine, such that within this system of self-surveillance they made known and disciplined their own bodies (Duits 2008) and internalised a politics of the body through subjectivation (Hamann 2009):

- Me So Paris when do you notice your body the most?
- Paris Umm maybe when I’m, probably when I’m getting changed
- ...
- Amelia When I get changed into my pyjamas I always end up like
[interrupted]
- Charlotte Looking in the mirror?
- Amelia Yeah and I’m always like, I don’t want to look cause [sic] I look
fatter

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

Together with the isolation, examination of body parts and then the divulgence of their dissatisfaction, the girls confessed the sins of the flesh in a way that countered any sense of their false consciousness and empowered them via their knowing:

- India We were lining up to practice our diving and all the boys were
going ‘is she pregnant?’
- Me And how did that make you feel?
- India Umm, well I knew I had, *I knew I was a bit over weight* because
cause [sic] like I had just come to Franklin and I was eating a lot
to smother like the homesickness and *I had packed on a few pounds*.
But, like, but like it did hurt for them to say it
- ...

- India My brother said I needed to go to fat camp [girls giggle], yep my own brother
- Me And how did that make you feel?
- India Umm, I'm not really sure because it was only yesterday, he actually went onto the internet typed in fat camp and I think I took it as like *yeah I don't really eat healthy*. I mean I'll have an apple or a banana every so often but I do have, like a, you know, those little kit kats you can get? I do have like one of them with my milk every night. But, like, hearing it from your brother it's really annoying

Focus group, 2 28th June 2010, my emphasis.

The cultivation of a power that produces “us and our individuality at the same time that it works upon us” (Hook 2004, p. 240), hints at the ways in which the imperfect body befalls a narcissistic gaze and conduct—in this instance with regard to the regulation of weight—is initiated from this moment of self-monitoring. In the extended dialogue that follows it is possible to see the interlaced nature of a power that policed the monitoring, confessing and compartmentalising of the body. The “rolling down of socks” can be seen to mobilise a rhetoric of the work to be done and the maintenance involved in the governance of girlhood:

- Felicity Oh my knees kind of, sorry my knees kind of stick into each other. I was looking into the mirror after PE today and I was like, ohh my knees look really weird
- Monique My legs are, like, hyper-extended or something so when I stand up they don't stay still they like move back outwards and it looks really weird
- Me So, we've got two people that are interested in their legs; Felicity because hers go in and Monique because hers go out
- Charlotte I'm with them

Me Charlotte's with them, is that because you are conscious of your legs?

Charlotte Yeah because of riding my calves are like huge and my thighs are just fat

...

Me And what sort of things do you think about when you're doing PE, do you ever think about, umm, do you think about [interrupted]

Amber Looking ugly

Me Well, do you think about looking ugly?

Amber Well the shorts aren't nice

Stephie In PE yeah you're always in the mirror going like [does action of looking at herself in the changing room mirror]

Amelia And there's a mirror just as you walk out the door and we spend ages there just looking and the teachers their like 'come on'

Amber [sarcastically] It's a nice big mirror

Felicity When you walk out you look at the mirror and you're like, wow no

...

Me Do you ever think about, like, your own body when you're doing sport?

Felicity Yes

Me Quite a few people said yes I'm going to start with you then Amelia

Amelia I have fat ankles

Me And do you think about that when you're doing sport?

Amelia Not really but it's just because the way we wear our uniform our socks have to be like pulled up and it just makes our legs look really wide. So that's why we all roll down our socks to make them into trainer socks which really doesn't help anything

Me What doesn't help what?

Amelia We roll down our socks and then it just looks weird, but it makes us feel better

Me That's funny because that's exactly what someone in the other group said about the socks

Felicity I just prefer having mine wrapped around my ankles than having them up my leg

Amelia Yeah

Charlotte Yeah they look horrible up your legs

Me Joanna you said yes as well what do you, what do you, do you think about your body when you're doing PE or physical activity?

Joanna I think about my tummy

Me You think about your tummy?

Joanna Because like some stuff is too tight for you because like it might be a bit too small for you

Me Sorry, it's a bit tight for you?

- Joanna Yeah so you think about what other people are looking at. So
you feel kind of, kind of worried
- Me Does anybody else feel notice their bodies when they are doing
PE?
- Louisa My height
- Monique I look at my legs
- Amber You've got nice legs

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

A wider understanding of governmentality makes the population and the features of the population “notable, speakable, writable” (Rose 1989, p. 6) and accountable and in the intricate, day-to-day, micro-governance of individuals, it is the ‘self’ and its embodied facets that are instead made known, brought to the fore and scrutinised. At the intersections of the feminine body-project—where the girls actually experienced and verbalised these experiences—meaning was reconstituted, assumed and problematised, such that observations like, “I’m getting wrinkles here, if you look closely you’ll see” (Aqua, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010) may appear on the surface as mundane but they can also be analysed as being connected to wider political struggles and unequal power relations (Giroux 2000). These seemingly banal comments are telling in terms of how the girls related not only to themselves but to the cultural climate that they shape and are shaped by. The dispersal and diffusion of technologies of government render cultural and structural problems thinkable and construct a space for the (re)production and (re)establishment of certain knowledge(s) and certain types of conduct. Social life and the commonplace institutions, products and practices therein, are “viewed by many contemporary theorists as an important terrain in which various modes of agency, identity, and values are neither prefigured nor always in place but subject to negotiation and struggle, and open for creating new democratic formations, though always within various degrees of iniquitous power relations” (Giroux 2004a, p. 60).

A preoccupation with applauding and simultaneously scrutinising the feminine figure, or the image of the ‘girl,’ recapitulates the struggles and negotiations that Giroux’s (2004a)

citation is suggestive of and as has been outlined in this chapter, through political mechanisms, apparatuses and modes of governance the mode, manner and instances of this surveillance are becoming increasingly more common and individualised (Harris 2004a). The effect of a biopolitically bolstered and transmogrified ‘can-do’ femininity is that “[w]hile some privileged young women are indeed reaping the benefits of new opportunities, those without economic or social capital are slipping through the ever-widening holes in what remains of our social safety nets” (Harris 2004b, p. xvii). In the current political climate that is marked by the changing economic order brought about by a global recession, this division may be felt more than ever. Consequently, I am mindful that my research with the privileged middle-upper class, white Franklin School girls, quite like the postfeminist address that flows through mediated consumer culture, is formulated upon a homogenous subjectivity. However, unlike the media’s postfeminist political ‘reality,’ I look to agitate the ‘normalising’ and subordinating discourses and through the impulses of the privileged I endeavour to unearth and theorise the respective gender, class and race specific positions (Giroux 2005).

As the neoliberal governance of subjectivity and the “heterogenous assemblage of technologies” (Rose 1989, p. 213) through which femininity is performed take shape in the day-to-day lives of the Franklin School girls, so the political converges upon the personal, the macro interlinks with the micro and the anatomo- and biopolitical coalesce. Appropriately then, Anita Harris’ (2004a) work—which has clearly been so insightful in this evocation so far—provides space for the practices of beautification and the emergence of body politics within the conceptualisation of these “changing sites of power and politics” (p. 189). Suitably, I take this directive forward and my discussion and theorisation now turns to the performance of gender.

4. GENDER PERFORMANCE & THE TECHNOLOGIES OF FEMININITY

In recognising the cultural climate as constituted through complex and ambiguous discourses concerning young femininity, in this chapter I initially seek to engage and work with the multifaceted scholarly positions that aid the theorisation of the lived experiences of the girls. To this end I seek to comprehend and situate the girls' narratives within the debates that are rife in academia between, for example, young femininity as something experienced through pleasure and enjoyment (girl as subject) and yet draws on and (re)constitutes the young girl according to patriarchal values (girl as object) (Duits and van Zoonen 2006; Gill 2007a, b, 2008). So remaining conversant of the neoliberal political sentiments previously mapped out, I now want to locate the young girls' sculpted subjectivities; their "mediated consumer-oriented subjectivities," (Evans et al. 2010a, p. 118) within these multiple readings. This preliminary discussion then, focuses on how power,—as conceptualised by Foucault—performativity (Butler 1990 [1999, 2006]) and the notion of technologies of femininity aid and formulate my understandings of the 'data.' Moreover, it explicates the framework within which my wider theorisation of everyday femininity is couched.

4.1 THEORISING THE TECHNOLOGIES OF FEMININITY

The possibility of women's agency has been a vexed question, and a fundamental tension lies within feminism's dual understanding of women as both victims of patriarchy *and* as self-determining actors (Duits 2008, p. 8).

The increasing visibility of the body and its resultant consumption, adornment and adaptability as part of popular (physical) culture has seemingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, been matched by a surge in scholarly work in which corporeality is axial—importantly within the context of individualised subject positions—and frames identity (body)politics. Paradoxically this individuality, in the sense that it is understood by the 'self' and 'through the self,' is predicated upon and within a historical present marked by both the disruption of what are traditional Western binaries—"nature and culture; mind and body; sex-biological and gender-culture; organic and machine" (Cole 1993, p. 85)—and the demands of late capitalist consumerism (Skeggs 1999), postfeminist sensibilities and contemporary political struggles.

4.1.1 *Furthering Foucault: Technologies of Power & Technologies of Self*

In the previous chapter Foucault's concepts of biopower and biopolitical governmentality were mobilised and interrogated to help me articulate the neoliberal, postfeminist subject. At this point I turn once more to the theoretical and substantive innovations of Foucault's genealogical approach to power and subjectivity. In this instance I find instruction not only in the sense that these insights are formulated upon the body but also in the historical specificity necessitated when engaging Foucault. Although the utilisation of Foucault by feminist scholars has been problematised (Ramazanoglu 1993), notably on account of his apparent neglect of gendered power constructions (Cole 1993), his explanation of the body/power/knowledge triad is forwarded on the basis that it provides a "background for understanding the making of the feminine body" (Cole 1993, p. 86).

Foucault's theorising of power developed throughout his life and the evolution of his thesis prematurely ended, as a result his work raises questions, is open to contestation and subsequently can operate in dialogue with the researcher/'data.' Modern power, as conceived in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), does not rest in the hands of one individual, institution, space; it does not operate solely through exclusion but rather it functions as a 'micro-physics' (Cole 1993), a capillary like, diffuse power that is ubiquitous and notable within everyday practices, struggles and interactions. What is presented then, is a complex web of (in)dependency whereby power is disassociated from any substantive, locatable body and rather invested in "a topographical configuration of light, bodies, gaze" (Boyne, cited by Cole 1993, p. 86). Foucault's early expositions of power tended upon the disciplinary nature imbued within the discursive: the technologies of power. In this sense the female body is constructed as 'docile,' the power of capitalism, men, postfeminist sensibilities and consumerism mark the body and are inscribed upon it whilst the girl herself has become "the principle of [her] own subjection" (Foucault 1979, p. 203). Following Rose (1999, p. 52), these technologies of power are "imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired ones." The power to punish is replaced with the power to regulate; the focus on conduct implies an active citizen who is incited to work on the 'self' in the hope of producing these 'desired effects.' Thus the knowledge necessitated for the management of the body is imbued with a power that constitutes a "regime of truth" (Foucault 1988, p. 18). In centralising discourse within discussions of power, the body, and the formation of

subjects and subjectivity, Foucault pointed towards how practices of historical descent comprise subjectivities that are worked upon and contextually specific (Cox and Thompson 2000; Larsson, Fagree and Redelius 2009). Gendering this discussion, Bartky (1990, p. 80) synthesises modern power and locates it as the “female body enters ‘a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it’ [Foucault 1979, p. 138]. The disciplinary techniques through which “docile bodies” of women are constructed aim at a regulation which is perpetual and exhaustive.”

Advancing the power/knowledge nexus, and attending to the citizen-subject as no longer passive, Foucault’s later work decries his previous focus on the technologies of power, noting instead a more autonomous figure “endowed with agency through the potential to ‘choose’ amongst a variety of discourses” (Evans et al. 2010a, p. 120). Although these discourses remain limited, individuals may be permitted 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” (Foucault 1988, p. 18). Through the technologies of the self the individual not only understands themselves as a subject but acts accordingly. In the theoretical space opened scholars such as Pirrko Markula (2003) have found room for practices of ‘freedom’ and transformation whereby the individual recognises “her/himself as a subject and in this sense, s/he can be understood to counter the technologies of power” (Markula 2003, p. 88). As such, and with Foucault’s new trajectory, the betterment of the ‘self’ is possible. For Markula (2003) this aspirational (self)improvement is dependent upon both ethical self-care and critical self-reflection, the former involving an assessment of the direction and rationale of action and the later the intent behind the act. As follows, engaging in physical activity, for example, can be comprehended as an intentional activity undertaken to “increase one’s ‘self’ as an ethical being” (Markula 2003, p. 99) or as an obsessive exercise in the quest for compliance with dominant discourses. Comparatively,

wearing the latest fashion does not serve as a technology of the self, but if an individual woman’s conscious, critical efforts to make a political statement through dress can provoke “a critical querying reaction” (Lloyd, 1996, p. 258), she has potentially problematized women’s present cultural condition and can have an impact on power relations (Markula 2003, p. 103).

Contending with the micro political implications of modern power through an examination of the work of Bartky (1990) and Markula (2003) I hope to have shown how the technologies of power and technologies of the self can speak to and work back upon the ‘agency pendulum’ (Gill 2007c, cited by Evans et al. 2010a) and the debates excavated in my discussion of the governance of girlhood. So, whilst Markula (2003, p. 92) employs Foucault to counter claims of females “doomed forever to cope with the discursive construction of femininity rather than transforming it,” Bartky (1990, p. 75) belies little scope for resistance:

The absence of formally identifiable disciplinarians and of a public schedule of sanctions serves only to disguise the extent to which the imperative to be “feminine” serves the interest of domination. This is a lie in which all concur: Making up is merely artful play; one’s first pair of high-heeled shoes is an innocent part of growing up and not the modern equivalent of foot-binding.

Although undoubtedly instructional when delving into Foucault’s genealogy, the subtleties in the lived experiences of the girls in my study, speak to the ‘somewhere’ in between, the composite, fused and complicated borders where differing theoretical positionalities rest. And with Arthurs (2003), I feel that these oscillations need not be discussed as dichotomous, alternative positions, rather the job for academic feminism is to live, work and function—as the girls we engage do—within this neoliberal popular culture that is framed by postfeminist sentiment. In view of this, I combine Foucault’s notion of the technologies of the self with Butler (1990 [1999, 2006]) and in doing so I am indebted to the work of Evans et al. (2010a) as I theorise the lived experiences of the young girls according to a framework of the technologies of femininity.

4.1.2 Furthering Foucault: Technologies of Femininity

In conceptualising and foregrounding the technologies of sexiness, Evans et al. (2010a) argue that Foucault’s later workings when combined with Judith Butler’s not only make gender a principle feature for consideration but also allows for a more intricate articulation of the relationship between subjectivity and agency. In what follows I want to explore how the (re)working, (re)constituting of subjectivities is linked to the interactions between this sense of personal agency and a sense of voice and ‘choice’ and the social context in which we find ourselves (Green and Singleton 2006). Put differently, and specific to my thesis, I want to understand how the young girls both actively (de)construct

the mediated subjectivities they readily consume as part of popular (physical) culture and yet continue to actively and pleasurably re(construct) and sculpt their own lived subjectivities in accordance with dominant discourses which represent them as objectified female bodies.

Judith Butler's oft cited concept of performativity, like Foucault's theorising, is open to multiple readings; Butler (1990 [1999, 2006], p. xv) herself notes that "it is difficult to say precisely what performativity is . . . because my own views on what "performativity" might mean have changed over time." Further, Beverly Skeggs (1999) cites that it is important not to confuse performativity with performance; in this sense the *performance* of a single act is markedly distinct from the reiterative and citational *performativity* of gender. To borrow from Susan Bordo (1992), Butler's performative approach "is enormously insightful (and pedagogically useful) as a framework for exploring the ongoing, interactive, imitative processes by means of which the 'self,' gender (I would add race as well), and their illusions of authenticity are constructed" (p. 168, additions in original). In a Foucauldian sense, as "Judicial power inevitably "produces" what it claims merely to represent" (Butler 1990 [1999, 2006], p. 3) so the female subject is discursively constituted, has no 'true' substance (Duits 2008) and gender "is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (Butler 1990 [1999, 2006], p. xv) that are at once culturally and historically naturalised. Understanding gender in this way posits that there is no woman (doer) before the performativity of woman (deed).

The subject herself is encapsulated within a powerful *mêlée* of discourses and as the operation of power is reliant on the presence of resistance so too is there no subject without subjectivation:

The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects . . . "agency," then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition (Butler 1990 [1999, 2006], p. 145 emphasis in original).

Through an interrogation of drag, Butler "exposes the tenuousness of gender "reality" in order to counter the violence performed by gender norms" (1990 [1999, 2006], p. xxv); and in doing so invokes a sense that the compulsion to repeat both allows 'agentic' action

in the form of variation and divergence while being rule-bound and wrought with the dynamics of power that make it significant and recognisable in the first instance. Therefore, subversion from the ‘norm’—whether in the form of aesthetic stylisation or otherwise—is only understood and intelligible through the dominant discourses of the ‘normative.’ The performance of drag is underwritten by traditional gender, male/female, binaries that are naturalised, essentialised and legitimised (Butler 1990 [1999, 2006]). In this sense Butler’s deepening of the technologies of the self, in terms of the ‘agency’ offered to the subject-citizen, resonate both ontologically and empirically². With reference to Markula’s (2003) previous citation concerning the critical self-reflection and fashion adornment then, the ‘choice’ to wear and perform in a certain manner is not denied, however, the politicising signification of the performance is only made possible by a doubling back, and folding in upon the ‘normal’ and anticipated. Rather than comprehending the technologies of the self as an absolute means to ‘freedom’ as per Markula (2003), I garner my understanding of the girls’ spoken, written, drawn accounts of ‘agency’ to be valuable expressions of their lived bodily experiences. But these body technologies (Wesely 2003) are in a simultaneous dialogue with the historical present.

Consequently, this chapter contributes to the debates put forward thus far—these are debates that fundamentally distinguish between the girl as a passive, duped recipient of culture’s pedagogical signs, symbols, discourse and the girl as an active, autonomous ‘freely choosing,’ freely consuming citizen—by supplementing the excavation of the theoretical space created by combining the technologies of the self (Foucault 1988) and performativity (Butler 1990 [1999, 2006]) with the lived experience of girls. As I noted previously, I have been guided in this work by Evans et al.’s (2010a) theorising of the technologies of sexiness. Through mobilising these technologies they proclaim “an approach to agency that would allow complex analyses of enacting agency within the limitations and possibilities of gender identities and mediated subjectivities” (p. 127). Their call for empirical work that employs this framework explicitly suggests the combination of cultural analysis with first person accounts; this is research that locates the subjective and the cultural as being inextricably linked. I find particular solace in their directive, for engaging the technologies of sexiness agenda feminist scholars “avoid positioning other women as problematic (either in terms of their ‘choices’ or their ‘agency’

² I am not unaware of the postmodern denial of the interior determinants of identity when I deploy Butler’s notion of performativity. However, with Bordo (1992), this does not detract from it being an insightful and useful framework for understanding and analysing the performance of gender.

to make ‘choices’), while also drawing attention to the regimes of power operating within neo-liberal and postfeminist rhetoric” (p. 127). Following this idiom, and remaining cognisant of the circulating discourses that formulate our present cultural conditions, I am mindful, therefore, not to dismiss out of hand the examples of ‘agency:’ the critical voice I observed.

Whether termed technologies of sexiness (Evans et al. 2010a), body technologies (Wesely 2003), technologies of gender (de Lauretis 1987) or technologies of femininity (Bartky 1990) the formulation is fairly consistent, these are technologies deployed by individuals in the process of gender performativity. So whilst renaming Evans et al.’s (2010a) framework and somewhat reworking Bartky’s (1990) technologies of femininity concept—a reworking that is premised fundamentally on the overly deterministic and restrictiveness of the concept as it was theorised in 1990 and the already espoused need not to ignore the way that these technologies may effect gender negotiation (Wesely 2003)—I now seek to examine the various meanings that the technologies of femininity held for the young girls and how this related to their gendered, embodied subjectivities (Wesely 2003). The technologies of femininity can be broken down into the everyday practices that constitute them; revealing the operation of power at the level of the micro political (Wesely 2001) and founding the theoretical in the ‘real.’ In this sense then the technology inferred is not simply a furthering of a theoretical exposition but also a material means. Through technologies females work on and through themselves and invest in the ‘self’ as a feminine body-subject (Bartky 1990). I am referring here to the multitude of technologies, techniques, preparations and knowledges that are grappled with, mastered, and deployed as part of the day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute lives of young girls (Wesely 2003).

Within our historical present (as outlined in chapter three) the engagement with and of these technologies of femininity is marked by the pervasive and ubiquitous visibility of the body and the incitement of the female to consume the individual technologies necessary to sculpt this body (McRobbie 2008). The consumption and embodiment of femininity occurs in a climate that proclaims and heralds the rhetoric of the ‘free-to-choose’ individual and marks and manages this individual in accord with the dominant discourses of biopolitical neoliberal governmentality (Gill 2007a, b, 2008; McRobbie 2008). It is a climate in which the body is highly mediated, a notion that proved pivotal as the girls negotiated

and sculpted their own subjectivities. In what follows I hope to unpack how the girls positioned, understood and experienced themselves in relation to the complexities of cultural power and how they “negotiate[d] a physical sense of themselves” (Garrett 2004, p. 223).

4.2 TECHNOLOGY OF FEMININITY: POPULAR (PHYSICAL) CULTURE

Textually mediated discourse is a distinctive feature of contemporary society existing as socially organized communicative and interpretive practice intersecting with and structuring people’s everyday worlds and contributing thereby to the organization of social relations of the economy and of the political process (Smith 1990, p. 163).

While noting that our present day is marked by the ubiquitousness of the media throughout popular culture, it is important as Miller (2006) reminds us, to locate this within historical power configurations, critically musing on the concerns and problems it may supposedly conceal or erase. More ‘traditional’ as well as emergent media forms, as ever, are invested in/with power relations that create new consequences for human beings: human bodies. Whether experienced and consumed as a leisure pursuit, for novelty or for entertainment, popular (physical) culture needs to be read as being encapsulated within wider iterations of power and as articulating a deeper cultural politics (Andrews 1995; Grossberg 1992, 1997a). Subsequently, and premised upon Giroux (2004a, p. 59), popular (physical) culture—the divergent images, sounds and movements that inhabit it—encompasses “the social field where goods and social practices are not only produced, distributed, and consumed but also invested with various meanings and ideologies implicated in the generation of political effects.” The healthification of popular culture and the associated invitation to consume the physical (see movement three in the prologue) ushers meaningful, significant and now moving bodies to interact with each other and cultural images and ideals in a manner that (re)produces societal expectations in powerfully contextual ways (Liimakka 2008).

Consumer culture is shaped by a pervasive preoccupation with the body; more specifically a concern with the youthful female body that is seen to be enjoying the good life (Featherstone 2010). Kimberly Oliver (2001, p. 144) acknowledges the fastidious fascination with the flawless physical form as it is depicted throughout “glossy teen magazines,” and I would suggest that the combination of this rumination with the

gendered cultivation of appearance (Featherstone 2010) can be extended to the multifaceted components that comprise popular (physical) culture. The production, distribution and consumption of these texts is imbued with mediated knowledge (Giroux 2004a) concerning how the body should be, look, act and move through the power of a generalised concept of *bionormality*. On any given day a young girl is inundated with messages about their body and the practices of the body they should impart. From magazine articles and television programmes to the visual representations brandishing the urban landscape, the girl is incited to buy the ‘top 12 beauty essentials this winter;’ ‘give yourselves a treat with these foodie face mask recipes;’ wear boots this winter in order to ‘add some edge to a girly outfit’ (My Bliss 2010). This exhorts a need to take seriously the inter-relationality between popular (physical) culture and how it is engaged and experienced by those positioned centrally.

Impelled in this instance by Featherstone (2010), I give particular consideration to two forms of bodily representation—body image and body without image—drawing out the ways in which the consumption of the ideal and desirable female body differed according to its materialisation as either a static image (body image) or a body in motion (body without image). As such I centre the discussion on the girls’ engagement with and navigation of the image culture (re)created throughout the pages of teen magazines and through the moving (hyper)real bodies of the computer game “We Cheer.” The accumulation of these relative perspectives, that chime with notions of the body as simply a unidirectional vision and/or a sensed and felt experience, move us to re-examine the relation of the body as a subject-object (Featherstone 2010). I do not seek to rectify the ambivalence and inconsistencies of the body-as-a-project as perhaps Featherstone (2010) would hope for³; instead as per the physical cultural studies mantra, I deploy the twofold theories of bodily representation in an effort to better comprehend the situated ‘everydayness’ of the girls’ lives. In so doing I focus on the types of body image advanced by Featherstone (2010) and the incumbent affectivity that accompanied the girls’ contestations and critique of the images they encountered, as well as their simultaneous

³ Featherstone concludes, for example, by calling for more “research to understand the ways in which the affective image works, and how people move between different registers, between the mirror-image and the movement-image, between affect and emotion, between the subject-object and the sensation of visceral and proprioceptive intensities, between the body image and the body without image” (2010, p. 213). This thesis and chapter specifically, does not set out to explicitly answer this call, although some contributions are made in this sense. Instead I utilise Featherstone’s bodily representations as a springboard for my own analysis of the body shown throughout the print media and the moving body of the “We Cheer” game.

offering of contradictory discourses concerning their own experiences: “[this] applies especially to bodies in motion, or imbued with the possibility of movement, as opposed to the type of ocular narcissistic identification we get with the mirror-image of a static unified body-and-face” (Featherstone 2010, p. 195). That being said, I do initially turn to the motionless body image.

The body as an object; as a captivated and captured static image, is widely visible and available throughout popular culture. Throughout the collection of glossy magazines that the girls informed me they read, the image of the thin, attractive, glamorous young woman was rife and the tweenage mediascape can certainly be seen to promote a belief that thinness and heterosexual attractiveness are a cultural ‘norm’ (Tiggemann, Gardiner and Slater 2000 see appendix five). However and strikingly, the girls demonstrated a definite understanding of the crafted and manipulated image that populates the media texts:

Lucy Is it meant to be ideal, like what we think is ideal?

Me What you think is the ideal and perfect body

Lucy What, so like, what the magazine told us?

Me Well if you think that’s ideal or perfect, what you think

Workshop 4, 20th May 2010.

In questioning my expectations regarding the workshop activity the girls’ media talk (Duits 2008) positioned them very clearly as active agents and countered a contention that they were merely passive dupes, absorbing socio-cultural forces (Tiggemann et al. 2000):

Aqua People don’t wanna [sic] read about ugly people, people wanna
[sic] read about, the magazines won’t sell

Lottie They wanna [sic] look like the people in the magazines that they
are told is perfect

Amber The magazines want to sell, so they can't really talk about like really fat, ugly people. They can but I mean like, people prefer to read about skinny people

Kate They can, they can but if they do they do it in a negative way not in a positive way. They never talk about it positively

Workshop 4, 20th May 2010.

The media's unrealistic and ameliorated portrayal of the female body and the part these popular cultural forms play in how the girls (re)constructed themselves was a prominent feature of the workshop dialogue. The nature of the girls' sculpting of their subjectivities alongside their interactions with everyday culture presented a picture of the agentic and transgressive, yet this was folded back and (re)invested in a different, more restrictive fashion when the textual was being embodied. An extended exchange between India, Paris and Eva exemplified how the mediated body of popular (physical) culture intersected with their own appreciation of their body. The conversation acted as a 'work-in-progress,' the girls seemed to be collectively realising their subject positions through their interrogation of the celebrity/model body as too thin, falsified and distinguishable from their own, nonetheless at the same time they had to self consciously remind themselves and "try and keep it [the unrealistic representation of the body] in mind" when going about their day to day lives:

India But when I look in the magazines the thing is I don't class them as thin I just think they are normal. I don't know if that's wrong? I just don't think when people say 'oh they're so skinny', I just know when I see them, and they say oh 'how nice they look' or whatever, I just think that's how you're supposed to look. I just think well how come I don't look like that?

Me I was going to say, how does that make you feel then?

Eva I wouldn't look at their bodies or anything, I would look at their face what they look like, what their face looks like. I don't look at their bodies thinking ohh I would like to look like them or

anything because I just wouldn't. I would like to be me, I would want to be me or not like them because they're just models

Paris I look at their bodies and I think well how do they get that thin and stuff? And then you see some of them, you never see them out of place you know what I mean? And you think ohh even though they're like six stone or something like that they don't, they don't look ill, they don't look ill, they just I think, do you know what I mean?

Eva I think a lot of time they're like, they probably do look ill some of them but it's computerised as well. So like they take pictures and they like, change it on the computer. So if you wanted to look like them you can't look like them because they've been changed on the computer, so you don't really look like, they wouldn't look like that

Me So it doesn't make you, it doesn't make you think about your own body when you look at them?

Paris I do

India I try to keep it in mind but

Eva Like when you see those eye mascara adverts and hair adverts, it's not their real hair and it's not their real eyelashes and stuff they umm. I was saying to my mum yesterday they were putting like extending lashes, it makes your eyelashes look longer and everything but they're not their real eyelashes. So, but that's probably they just have to advertise it for sale

India They've got them kind of waxed on

Me What do you think India what do you, does it make you think about yourself or?

- India Well I don't really go to the supermarket to like see it, but if I do I try to keep in mind that it is all blow dried and stuff, but like again it's sort of like how do they? It's like what Paris said, like you can't help it, you know they're not like that and they are normal and you think they're normal but actually they're not, but you just can't help to think it
- Paris You can't see it sometimes, you just, they look so thin but you can't see, you think it's normal. You just think it is cause [sic] I don't know you just see that. I don't know, their figure is just the figure. I always see it in the magazines, it's like the curves. You have like really small here [indicates her waist] it goes out a bit and you've got [Eva interjects]
- Eva But they've always got really big busts
- Paris Yeah big bust, small like hour glass figure, or they're either straight thin or they've got an hour glass figure. You don't ever see the in between you know?

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Here the girl, as feminist critic, deployed technologies of knowledge regarding popular culture to aid her appropriation of her own subjectivity. Interestingly however, there seemed to be two, interconnected, mechanisms through which this was achieved, these operated around the distinction between the static image as object (Featherstone 2010) and an image that is indicative of themselves. Eva, for example, highlighted that she would “want to be me” and not the image shown in the magazine; a female she attends to as a “model.” Eva envisioned herself as dissimilar and therefore occupied a non-comparable subject position; in a similar vein Amber constructed the celebrity body as different on the basis that the celebrity was a “professional.”

- Charlotte Yeah but even, no but like even when you're watching tv it's like you know? [interrupted]
- Amber That you're not ever going to look like them and they're like a professional so it's like, you get used to it

Me They're a professional?

Amber Yeah you're like professionally made up with your hair done,
your make up

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

The utilisation of cultural resources such as magazines as a methodological strategy (Johnson et al. 2004) provided an opportunity to examine how young girls (re)construct, experience and interpret the meaning of their own bodies against the backdrop of contemporary mediated discourses. The invocation of multiple bodies (although predominantly homogenous in physicality) allowed for the expression of multiple voices and invited the emergence of contested and discontinuous narratives (Oliver 2001). No matter how articulately the girls countered the overly 'skinny,' "airbrushed" celebrity body, this was always framed upon and around an acknowledgement that the frequency and intensity of the media images *did* incite their own body preoccupation. The extract that follows brings to light the proliferation of mediated female bodies and how this produced the a/effect of fixating the girls to the 'flawed' features of their own bodies:

Roxy It makes you feel like they actually feel like that

Lottie Yeah, no cause [sic] if you don't see it for long enough you get
dulled into this sense that they are all perfect

Aqua Then you go home and look in the mirror and you're just kind
of like seriously depressed

Lottie I know, I've had this spot on my nose for ages that won't go
away

Me So you do feel like it affects you?

Lucy Yeah

Me So it does kind of make you feel bad about it?

- Lottie But then it makes me feel good because I know they are
airbrushed, but then I forget and just feel bad again
- Aqua But also you think that all the guys look at it
- Group Yeah
- Aqua And think like ohh that's how every girl is meant to look and so
there are a few girls who look like that, three girls, and everyone
else doesn't
- Lottie We all have blotchy skin and [trails off]
- Aqua And all the guys seem to think that that's what girls look like so

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Fascinatingly, and in contrast to their previous contentions and media critique, the media representations of young femininity and the young female body implied that the properties of the print media were being felt in a direct way by the girls. That is felt in a marked physical manner that resonated with the bodies of those girls at Franklin School. Experienced in a personalised way,—that is a private ‘note’ between myself and Lucy that she did not want the other girls to see—these encounters with cultural technologies (Ouellette and Hay 2008a, b) could, on certain occasions and for certain individuals, “make[s] me feel upset because I want to look like that” (Lucy, Workshop 4, 20th May 2010). Furthermore, as Liimakka (2008, p. 132) proffers, and as the conversation between the Aqua and the girls evinced, it may “also have an indirect influence on girls’ body image through influencing boys’ expectations and evaluations” of them. The mediated body posed obstacles for the girls as they sought to establish themselves within the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990); forging their position as attractive and pretty for the on looking school boys was troubled by the presentation of the celebrity female body “because like Jennifer Aniston is like so beautiful and Cheryl Cole or Cheryl, what’s her name now? [someone interjects: “Tweedy”], Cheryl Tweedy umm you see how beautiful they are and all the boys and everyone think they’re like stunning and then they don’t realise how pretty like you are” (Amelia, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010). Consuming the celebrity—celebrated—flesh when experienced and lived through like this, did not impose

a directional cause and effect relation between the media and body image concerns, instead the mediated female form and its predominance throughout popular (physical) culture provided one particularly powerful context for the interrogation and crafting of subjectivities (Liimakka 2008). This concept was made explicit during a workshop magazine exploration task where I asked the girls to look through a selection of 'teen' magazines (see appendix five) and pick out an image that represented 'the ideal' female body. Having done so, the girls annotated why they chose the image they had, I offer Lottie's at this point as an example:

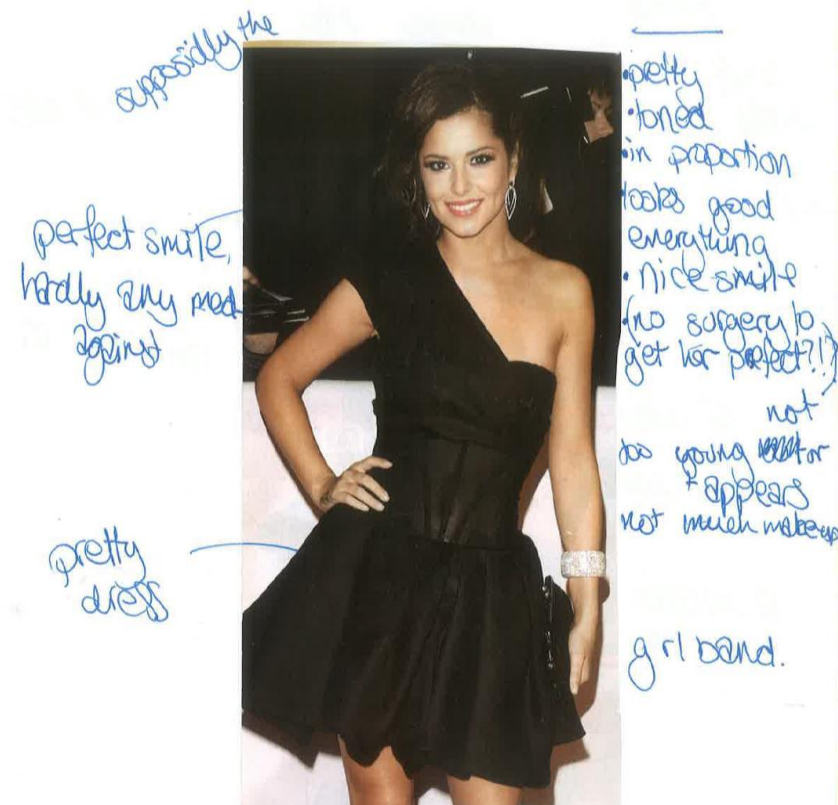


Figure 5. Lottie's magazine exploration task: Cheryl Cole/Tweedy. Workshop 4, 20th May 2010.

In providing space for the 'voice' of the girls to be heard I am continuously conscious of the need to respect and represent their experiences as they occurred and as they (re)lived and (re)told them with/for me. Thus I do not necessarily present a coherent, consistent set of analyses and theoretical reasoning. Not wanting to privilege one reading (the girls' interpretation and/or a reading of the cultural forces) over the other entails the somewhat

muddled and non-formulaic display and theorisation of ‘data.’ Bearing this in mind, the girls’ engagement with teen glossy magazines revealed how they positioned themselves as knowledgeable consumers but also how they were positioned in ways that moved their bodies into focus. Building on this dynamic, and somewhat charged by Featherstone’s (2010) directive to take into account and to take seriously the body in movement (body without image), I see that the girls’ performances during, and interactions with, “We Cheer” exemplified and offered an invigorated account of how the girl contends with her own femininity as it borders that which is (re)established throughout popular (physical) culture. I feel that the potency of their interaction with the female bodies of the cheerleaders was indicative of the increased affective intensity that was made possible through the moving image, and that this was then compounded once more when the body that watched, experienced also. Put another way, the feelings evoked—be that feelings of annoyance towards an ‘unrealistic’ portrayal of young girlhood, or individual feelings of inadequacy—when looking at the still body as image were accentuated and magnified when working with “the range of proprioceptive ‘fleshy’ senses and memories” (Featherstone 2010, p. 208) induced by the moving image. The movement of the body that was simultaneously watching the body without image only accentuated the affective responses experienced.

Conceivably more than the print media, new media forms harbour a fascination with and concentration on the simulated or corporeal girl that resonates and interjects into the “experiences of being and having female bodies” (O’Riordan 2007, p. 243). Thus, “We Cheer” entices the female girl to morph into a digital display of cheerleading (hyper)femininity through the utilisation of the entire body to perform “various choreographed routines” (Namco Bandai 2008). The *coupling* of the real and hypereal provided a context in which the physical body took on certain embedded—heteronormative—discourses. The way in which the girls shifted between their analysis of the female body on the screen and the surveillance of their own physicality during a ‘Girls Playing Games’ observation task captured the essence of this:

Aqua Their thighs are too thin

Lucy You you’re always talking about thighs Aqua

[Girls laugh]

Lottie [jokingly] Cause [sic] Aqua's thighs are as big as America

Group Ohh [giggling]

Aqua My brother calls them rugby players' thighs as well

Workshop 2, 6th May 2010.

Through playing, and watching their peers play the game, the girls conversed about the images on display; once more they deemed the female cheerleader an unrealistic representation of the female body:

Me What do you think about the girls that you are seeing?

Group They're skinny

Lottie Argg their legs are too long

Kate They're soooo skinny

Robin Their heads are too big and their legs are too long

Nina Blonde and Barbie

Kate They are so skinny

Workshop 2, 6th May 2010.

Overall the critique that this female body met was vehemently felt and articulated; possibly a response to the physical element now accompanying the image. As the body moved, it was felt and experienced in ways that induced increased affectivity, which was seen to be revealed as annoyance and disapproval. Roxy (Workshop 2, 6th May 2010), for example, seemed to condemn the fact that "everything you choose you will, it will it will never look real." Based on their understanding of what was and was not realistic the girls engaged the cheerleader and problematised not only the body itself but the cultural scenario that permitted this type of portrayal:

Aqua They look so pretty

Lottie But I suppose they have to be if they are going to get people to buy it

Robin They wouldn't actually get a real girl doing this

Kate Yeah

Aqua Yeah I know. They all look fake but

Lottie But they had to make them look perfect

Kate Because no one would want like a fat one

Aqua I would

Lottie No seriously no one would buy it . . . Aqua you could guarantee you'd want to be thin. So they have got to make them all thin and umm, perfect

Workshop 2, 6th May 2010.

With Tiggemann et al. (2000), the girls, at particular moments, employed sophisticated analyses of the existence of a thin ideal that was socially and culturally specific and determined. The key facet however, was that this occurred sometimes on a coherent and consistent basis and at others times fleetingly and momentarily. In this way the girls' talk was dissimilar to that of those in Tiggemann et al.'s (2000) study. Although both groups of girls could "explicitly articulate the normative pressures on them" (Tiggemann et al. 2000, p. 656), this was often couched (in the workshops) in ways that did not wholly disassociate the girls in some way from the images they encountered. In light of this, the extract above provides two key moments for consideration, firstly it highlights the girls' awareness of the production, distribution and consumption nexus and the subsequent positioning of the female body with regard to this; for instance they deploy technologies of knowledge concerning the commercial desirability of the thin body "because no one would like a fat one." And secondly, this assessment of our contemporary climate,

however insightful and informed, was located first and foremost by Aqua's contention that "they look so pretty." These ebbs and flows in the direction of the dialogue were of note throughout the workshops and focus groups. As I have offered before, the girls reworked and worked back on their experiences of the mediated and felt body. They were critical of the images presented to them and yet this was either not reflected in how they addressed their own body or they embarked on appraisals by underpinning them with their appreciation that it was "the prettiest one" that they "always go for" (Lottie, Workshop 4, 20th May 2010). The slippages between these two positions was epitomised when Aqua discussed the dance moves that they performed as part of the game:

- Me What do you think about the moves?
- Aqua They're very provocative
- Me Aqua what made you say that?
- Aqua They keep sticking out their bums [shows me the movement], *I love that move*

Workshop 2, 6th May 2010, my emphasis.

Here awareness that the game was inviting the girl player to perform provocative dance moves (Francombe 2010) was only understood as a counter narrative in as far as it was situated alongside the competing understanding that Aqua "love[s] that move." This back and forth movement between the available discourses of 'normalised' bodies and dance moves was never explicitly mentioned, the girls did not reflect upon their evaluation of both the static and moving image. Nevertheless, India and Paris did express an awareness of what they should think and how this actually played out in their everyday lives:

- India I'm ok with mine [body], but like umm we've all been told like, not to like submit to peer pressure but [interrupted]
- Paris You do
- India Sometimes you just can't help to think what if?

Paris Yeah that's what I mean, I'm always like, what if I was like this,
what if I was like that?

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

With this in mind it is possible to note that the girls were contending with multiple messages, from multiple sites regarding their bodies and these were being met with their own experiences of their bodies. Thus, and as cited by Smith Maguire and Stanway (2008, pp. 63-64) the complexity that emerged was unsurprising as individuals “free to choose their paths towards self-realization, are then faced with a loss of security; without fixed rules, individuals are constantly at risk of getting it wrong.”

4.3 TECHNOLOGY OF FEMININITY: GIRLS LOOKING AT GIRLS & BOYS LOOKING AT GIRLS

It was once a privilege of the wealthy, the noble, and the holy to have their individuality remarked upon, described, documented, recorded for posterity in image and text (Rose 1989, p. 132).

There was something in the glance, in the stare, in the gaze that was pivotal in the day to day lives of the girls; this was a look that offered contradiction, it was at once feared, anguished over and yet a source of gratification and reaffirmation. It signified meaning in an all together prescriptive fashion. The girls' accounts constructed the gaze as something that they could derive certain affective responses from and located it along gendered lines. There was the interrelated pleasure and anxiety of being looked at through the male lens, enjoyment from looking at 'others' through the female lens and yet affronted by the judgmental look returned (Evans 2010):

You know the boys? I feel like they're really confident and they don't actually care what they look like, cause [sic] sometimes they come into school and their hair is like sticking out everywhere. *Boys care what we look like and we become confident from what we look like* but they just don't care and I don't understand

Robin, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010, my emphasis.

This labyrinthine looking, the practice of gazing, raises important issues for feminist criticism especially when it is considered as implicated within and as an articulation of the operation of power (Newman 1992). As a technique in the governance and maintenance of the “fantasy of femininity” (Walkerdine 1989, p. 277) gazing, and the discursive truths fixed in the look, regulate how women evaluate their performance of gender. The shifting dynamics of Foucauldian power from a negative, dominance oriented imperative towards more local and dialogic power configurations of the ‘self’ (Foucault 1988) have accordingly instigated a forging of new subjectivities. The sovereign subject that emanated from previous power dynamics is replaced by a citizen subject who is actively formulated within and according to the “mechanisms of supervision, surveillance and review collectively conceived by Foucault as *the gaze*” (MacCannell and Flower MacCannell 1993, p. 201). For MacCannell and Flower MacCannell (1993), power (in both its dominating and pleasurable sense) and the gaze are critically examined as they relate to the woman as a victim, and the gaze and its relationship with its ‘victim’ is constituted along two lines: the instrumental and the identificatory. Both are seen as dialogically produced, that is the gaze turned from authoritative figure onto the victim while the victim themselves is looking back simultaneously and in an equally intense manner. As a result, in everyday experience MacCannell and Flower MacCannell (1993) contend that power and the gaze are inextricably linked in the mind of the those being looked at and in focusing on the interrelationship between figures of authority and ‘victims’ they interrogate this power-gaze dynamic:

Those who fear being denied a livelihood or a place to live if an aspect of their medical or police record is revealed, or their sexual orientation is known, dread exposure as much as they fear denial. The pragmatic response is for the intimidated to focus on the gaze . . . The intimidated will try to pass unnoticed . . . taking great care to represent themselves and their behaviour in a way they think appears as positive to their oppressors (MacCannell and Flower MacCannell 1993, p. 215).

What is suggested therefore is a resolve to comply, there is a powerful gaze but it is one that is looked back upon and returned. Somewhat reworking this, the girls’ discourse concerning their performance of a gendered subjectivity spoke to the need to behave in a way “that appears positive” (MacCannell and Flower MacCannell 1993, p. 215) and in-line with the ‘normative.’ This discourse surrounding similarity and the feeling that “everybody’s the same basically you have to be like them” (Eva, Focus group 2, 28th June 2010) is juxtaposed within a culture of individualisation. In this sense individuality was not

premised upon ‘standing out,’ rather the onus on individuality was experienced in the work done on the ‘self’ in order to (re)produce oneself according to the contextualised, politicised, historicised, (hetero)sexy image of ‘girl.’ Likewise in the conversation between Eva, Paris and India, the power-gaze dialectic was seen to be operational and manifest in the wearing of ‘jeggings⁴,’ where standing out (by wearing a skirt for example) entailed being gazed upon. On this occasion the practice of looking was not predicated upon the equal distribution of power and thus it resulted in condemnation: “you feel a bit left out because they just all look at you like ‘wow wow what do you look like?’” (Eva, Focus group 2, 28th June 2010). It was through the girls’ discussion of clothing on ‘home clothes day’ and their reference to the specific techniques employed by the girls in the different ‘houses’ at Franklin School (e.g. Raleigh Girls), that I can theorise the two-dimensional gaze; the instrumental and the identificatory according to MacCannell and Flower MacCannell’s (1993):

Paris And you go to school and you’re like, oh my god I wish I wore this skirt or I wish I wore my jeggings or I wish I wore this jacket. And I thought it’s a bit ridiculous that we think that way

Eva Like what you have to wear

Paris You have to wear what other people are wearing, it might sound, I don’t want to be copy cat but you know what I mean? You come into school and you’re the only one wearing a skirt like, for instance, and everyone’s wearing jeggings and you’re like oh my god what am I going to do? Because you know I’m the only one wearing a skirt

Me So, is it quite important to look kind of the same?

Paris Yeah

Eva Not exactly the same, not the same clothes but the same trend

⁴ Jeggings, according to the Urban Dictionary are a “fairly recent combination in fashion, achieved when combining leggings and jeans.” Available from: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=jeggings>. [Accessed 10th February 2011].

Paris I think it's quite comforting, quite comfortable, you don't want to be like a right idiot in a skirt when everyone's wearing these like trousers and then you're like [trails off]

India Especially the Raleigh Girls like Aqua and Lottie, they go onto Facebook and they organise the day before what they are going to wear. Because I've noticed on the day before, when I'm on Facebook, they're always on line and then the day after they're always like wearing the same, similar outfits

Me So you reckon the girls, it's really important to girls to be as part of the group?

India Yeah Raleigh Girls [members of one of the Franklin School 'houses'] are really together

Paris You don't want to go an [inaudible] people talking about you saying 'oh what is she wearing?' I mean that is what you don't want. So I think everyone wears the same because you don't want that and I think you want to go to school feeling comfortable that everyone that someone's going to wear the same as you, if that makes sense?

Me Yeah do you agree Eva or what do you? You're nodding along

Paris You want to go into school and think ahh I'm not the only one wearing a skirt or not the only one wearing jeggings, jeans or whatever, you know what I mean?

...

Eva People that you are surrounded by, I think wherever you go, you feel like if you're not looking right they would look at you. If you had pink hair or something you would straight away just go and you'd look at them because they stand out [Paris interjecting whilst Eva talks: "you want to blend in"]. Because if you were walking down the street and you saw Lady Gaga or something and she was wearing something, all these feathers on her face,

you'd straight automatically just look at them wouldn't you? And think ohh they look a bit strange

Paris That's why I think, that's why you want to blend in like with the jегging thing and stuff, you want to blend in

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Becoming a metaphor for signification the 'jегging,' and the 'appropriate' adornment of the 'jегging,' allows insight into the functioning of the critical gaze of 'others' in the girls' lives (James 2000). Further, and in the cultural context marked by technological advancement and the increased mediation of the social, the gaze can be seen to have taken on new forms, it is multi-modal, such that the looking that takes place is now a mediated enterprise and the 'composition' of the gaze has occupied a hyperreal form. It can be suggested therefore, that we ground our conceptualisations of the gaze within this conjoining of what is real and what is cyber, noting a blurring between the embodied and the ontological (O'Riordan 2007; Rich and Miah 2009).

In this sense, looking at and monitoring the body as it was 'lived' through a Facebook profile became somehow inescapable from the sculpting and surveying of the physical 'self' in preparation for 'home clothes day'—this was a hybridised femininity made known by the girls who were at once both fleshy and digital (Francombe 2010; Jones 2008). New social media and social networking sites can be thought of as the location par excellence upon which the contemporary moment is prefigured and in this regard Jessica Ringrose (2010) highlights the interconnectedness of new technologies such as Facebook, Bebo, YouTube, subjectivities, power, friendship dynamics and schooling. With Ringrose (2010, p. 170), the girls' jегging discussion above highlights the "the relationship between the social space of online SNSs [social networking sites] and schooling, focusing on how girls' representations online relate to their experiences in 'real life' at school." Personalised politics online inevitably implicate the schooled space of learning (Ringrose 2010).

The various practices of looking were notable and significant in the girls' experiences, these were searching, ambiguous looks that sought out the physical, the visible but also the absences and the not seen. The deployment of the various technologies of femininity can be understood as being mediated and sculpted in accord with the technology of the

gaze. Through the techniques and instances of looking and the felt experience of being subjected to the stare, the girls managed and negotiated their neoliberal subjectivities in, perhaps unsurprisingly, variegated ways.

4.3.1 Locating the Gaze: Boys Looking at Girls

The pursuit of the fantasy of neoliberal femininity is fuelled by the circulating and reciprocal “currents of consumer capitalism, modern ideologies of the self, and their crystallization” (Bordo 1991, p. 106) within the realm of popular consumptive practices. Correspondingly, Bartky (1990) notes that the ‘future girls’ (Harris 2004a; Heywood 2007) and ‘can-do’ girls (Harris 2004a) are, in a dialogic sense, realising unprecedented levels of determination whilst they simultaneously reside within, and under what are ostensibly patriarchal discourses. Within this cultural climate, and with Bartky (1990), the girls readily identified competing gazes, the origins of which were inconsistent; however, the role of the boy within the shaping of their subjectivities was remarkable as the talk between Paris and India depicted:

Paris It doesn’t matter what your size is or anything cause [sic] they’re popular the boys. Like in India’s class we join together, you just feel like oh what if they say something bad and you feel like oh my god what am I going to do if something gets out and I feel like, what if I wear this thing or something like that?

India I don’t trust anyone in my class

Paris Because it goes right round the boys’ little world or something it’s a bit, you get a bit embarrassed

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Moreover, when asked specifically whose gaze matters to them? Or put another way, who do they want to look good for? The girls were quick and assured in their responses:

Charlotte The boys [the other girls repeat this sentiment in unison and then giggle]

...

Amber The boys [they all then agree that they want to look good for the
 boys]

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

The male gaze was thus located as central in girls' (re)constituting of themselves as a subject. The extracts above both implicitly and explicitly nod to the privileged position afforded to the on looking boy and the resultant relegation of the girl to the object (an object formulated and represented through discourse and discursive practice) (Newman 1992). Following Bartky (1990), the panoptical male connoisseur was presupposed and constantly present in the day to day lives of the girls; they critiqued themselves and 'others' and were critiqued under this phallogentric gaze.

The multiple guises of gazing have, Grimshaw (1993) suggests, become a dominant theoretical theme in cultural studies, especially as this gaze (re)establishes axes of power that maintain the heteronormative status quo. By constructing the notion of gendered gazing, Stephie (below) not only located the power of the gaze differently according to who was doing the looking but further reinforced the idea that the body of the woman was (re)constructed and lived in the ways that it was viewed by the 'other'—in this instance not the "random person on the street" but the boy:

Stephie No umm like, you don't particularly want to like, you don't care
 if you appeal to people that you don't really know like a random
 person like. You kind of want to appeal to a person that you
 would know. You want to appeal to the boys at school that you
 know instead of like a random person on the street

Me And what would you like the boys that you know to think?

Stephie That she's pretty, got nice legs

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

As object of the gaze Stephie reproduced existing gender expectations by instilling corporeality as the defining feature of her own subject position. She was not alone however; the recurrent recourse to the physical established the gaze as a heterosexist mechanism of regulation. The management of this heterosexy subjectivity was of paramount importance to the girls as was evidenced through their desire to be noticed according to their body politic:

Me Anything particular about you that you would like them to comment on?

Amber Well I don't know it depends

Jasmine Face. Pretty face

Monique Your eyes, eyes are like the nicest things to be commented on

Amelia That's what most boys look at first I think

Amber That or what you wear

Amelia In [the film] Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging she says, 'what do you think when you look at a girl?' and they say 'the eyes or the boobs'

Stephie I think they look at your, if you're wearing like a short skirt or short shorts I think they [Amber interjects "the bum"], no I think they look at your legs

Monique Yeah it depends what you're wearing where they look

Stephie If you've got tanned legs and they're nice and not fat and hairy

Monique But then if you're wearing like a strappy top which is obviously tight that's got [inaudible but she indicates that it is short in the body] [interrupted]

Jasmine If you're fat

Amelia Or got big boobs

Monique If you're like skinny they'll think oh my god, but if you're on the other side [girls interject with "podgy"] then they're not really going to want to talk to you or anything

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

The performance and conciliation of (hetero)sexiness through the perspective of the boy looking on (Lamb 2010) had implications not only for the girl herself but also for 'other' girls who failed to embody the femininised corporoeconomicus (see chapter three) so revered by neoliberal political sentiment. Living as *the* 'girl' and managing the gaze was, in this instance, a task of negotiating—it was not managed holistically but rather the fall of the gaze upon the contours of the body (and its performance) was broken down, compartmentalised and individualised so that wearing a tight top was permitted if you were "skinny" and wearing a short skirt invited foci on the legs. In both scenarios there were risks to be managed: was the fat, excessive body visible? Were the legs tanned and was any out of control hair growth managed?

To return once more to Bartky's (1990) concept of the panoptical male connoisseur, the accounts of the girls related to not only the literal and theoretical origin of the male gaze in contemporary culture, they also revealed how the practices of looking mobilised the preparation and performance of a heterosexy subjectivity. Stephie's remark provided a stark reminder of this:

Stephie *If there weren't, if there weren't any boys everyone would be ugly* [girls react with shock to her statement, not necessarily disapproval or disagreement on all parts but shock all the same]. It's true it's true

Monique I was at an all girls school and some girls were still really pretty

...

Charlotte At Downie College it was all girls and my sister moved to Stott School and apparently in Downie College they could go in in

like trackie-bs on home clothes day. Like, they all go in trackie-bs, pyjamas and hoodies and they're like, they don't do their hair if they don't want to because it doesn't really matter. And then my sister said said when she goes to this school she has to do her hair like all the time like, she used to wear it curly like all the time and now she straightens it all the time and it's like such

Me What's the difference at the second one?

Charlotte There are boys

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010, my emphasis.

Gazing as a technology of femininity therefore worked two-fold as it perpetuated institutionalised gender inequality and presumed heterosexuality (Bartky 1990).

4.3.2 Locating the Gaze: Girls Looking at Girls

By locating the gaze's exteriority in these instances (for a discussion of the narcissistic, self policing gaze see chapter three), the girls discussed and positioned their bodies according to a theory of objectification, whereby the body came into existence through its relation to others:

Me So is it other girls? Do you worry about what you look like in comparison to other girls watching you?

Paris Boys and girls

Me Boys and girls? do you want to say a bit more?

Paris Umm like girls you don't want to look, you don't want them talking about you and like saying 'oh she looks so weird.' Cause [sic] you know they bitch about you sometimes. Well I don't know if they do, but you know all the popular girls, you're scared that they are going to think you're a right idiot. They're going to talk about you because they're the popular people, so like you don't want them like talking about you, then everyone

knows and like boys you just don't want to make yourself look like a right plonker [sic]

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Framed on the notation of the body as an object of the male gaze, the girls in this study distinguished the gaze of the other female; they (re)negotiated their subjectivities through their apprehension of other girls' looks, as well as the careful judging of "the appearance and behaviour of others (including celebrities) to establish what is appropriate" (Duits 2008, p. 172). The continuous movements between the looks and the practices of looking left little room for rest bite from what Carey, Donaghue and Boderick (2010) term habitual body monitoring. For the girls at Franklin School, defining and understanding their subjectivity through their peers was something that was readily commented upon. The gaze of other females from the same school was certainly present in the girls' day to day school lives:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| Robin | I was walking home from school a while ago and there was a huge bunch of like the year nines, as as I walked past they were all like sniggering and laughing it was really embarrassing |
| Roxy | They all just like stare at you |
| Me | So other girls can make you feel quite uncomfortable? |
| Group | Yeah |
| Roxy | For me it's actually more the girls than the boys |

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

The looks received from a "bunch of like year nines" led to embarrassment, and social comparison was compounded by the "sniggering and laughing," talking and the derogatory implication allied to these acts (James 2000). The ubiquity and enveloping of the gaze's intelligible implications for female subjectivity were made known through the practice of being looked upon by a (female) peer. As the extract below explicates, peers

were comprehended in terms of their role in the establishment and deployment of ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ ways of being (Carlson Jones 2001):

Stephie When you go into the Upper School the year nines they’re so, the year nines in the Upper School because they knew us from last year, they’re all just like ‘ohh lets check out her and urgh she’s not very nice’ and they like judge you like really much. So when you go to the Upper School you want to like on the first day you really want to look really nice so all the year nines are just like

Amelia That’s what I’m worried, about I’m worried about what they’ll think of me

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

This female-female gendered gazing was thus regarded as one of many amalgamated mechanisms in which social comparison took place. Interestingly—in light of the seeming worry and anxiety that being gazed upon provoked—the female was doubly positioned as being the object of the gaze but also as owning the gaze and utilising it to distinguish those who were performing neoliberal femininity in a supposedly undesirable, improper way. Through the appraisal of ‘other’ girls’ clothing, for example, the girl spectator fixed her look on the body of ‘other’ girls:

Eva It’s a bit like Joanna, she never wears what other peoples [sic] wearing, she just wears she she would just wear like a cardigan and stuff and she would like, not an old granny cardigan or anything, but it would be something like a garden jumper. She wears older clothes that wouldn’t; I wouldn’t wear what she would wear ever because it just isn’t my style

India [laughing] She looked so funny yesterday . . . she looks forty seven

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

The other girls at Franklin School, as aforesaid, played a prominent role in the management of the girls’ subjectivities; however the derivation of the gaze was at times not fixed and wholly identifiable. The practice of looking did not have to originate from a

recognisable source to retain its power, rather it could be diffuse in nature, permeating and proliferating social experiences and calling the girl and her performance of femininity into question:

- Monique And even if you're like going out with your family who you know they've seen you at like the worst of times, you still want to put a bit of make up on and stuff and do your hair
- Charlotte Because there are other people around when you go out
- Me So, it's other people as well? So you've got yourself, boys and then other people in general
- Amber Yeah I mean if someone else who you didn't even know just like gave you a weird look I'd like go look at myself in the mirror and see what's wrong because you'd be like, what are they looking at?

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

The surveillance of the 'self' through the looks of others operated to make the girls critically 'self' aware of their body and its performance. The acquiescent management of the body and the performance of femininity that often ensued can be seen to further (re)establish the appearance ideal and it negated any distinguishable coercion (Carey et al. 2010). As suggested previously, the dialogic gaze (MacCannell and Flower MacCannell 1993) required not just authoritative looking but also a reciprocal looking back. This gazing back and the subsequent 'action' taken—the deployment of techniques and apparatus of the 'self'—was only comprehensible in as far as the girl was presented (and at times presented herself) as “engaged in the freely chosen, 'fun' pursuit of desirability” (Carey et al. 2010, p. 3). It is to this dichotomous (gratifying-grievous) gaze that the analysis now turns.

4.3.3 Locating the Gaze: Gratifyingly Grievous

Newman (1992, p. 1030) cites that looking is “both a mode of telling and a source of pleasure.” the power imbued in a look can make one feel competing levels of satisfaction,

gratification and discomfort, anxiety. Often the girls in my study talked of experiencing these affective responses simultaneously. As Lottie, Robin, Roxy and Aqua negotiated with the gaze the potential ambiguity was revealed:

Lottie I think, I feel wherever I go cause [sic] I never feel confident around anywhere basically [Robin interrupts]

Robin Neither do I

Lottie Wherever I go I feel like I am being judged by everyone, like even when you're going shopping with your sister and something there are like sixteen year olds

Robin And people look at you

Lottie They look at you, just give you that look like [does a look as if the person is looking her up and down, scrutinising in a disapproving way]. I don't feel confident ever

Aqua I hate it because you feel like threatened when guys, men, you know like twenty year olds look at you

Lottie No you don't

Aqua Well yeah it's kind of weird

Robin It's scary

Aqua Like, when I go on the train to London by myself and guys sort of like look at you like that, it's kind of a bit scary or like weird. But it also makes you kind of feel pretty at the same time because you think like you must look a bit older; I don't know it's kind of [trails off]

Robin I kind of agree with Lottie, because umm umm I think that I never am really confident. I don't ever feel pretty so I don't, I

don't ever feel pretty so I don't ever feel like confident, like properly

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Locating the gaze multifariously and 'living through' it in different ways, the girls highlighted how it functioned in intricate ways depending upon the individual and context (Wesely 2003). Lottie and Robin's accounts, that were littered with negative tones of being 'judged' and lacking in confidence, were countered and reimagined in light of Aqua's 'guys on the train' experience. Herein Aqua was aware both of the threatening and weird looks that befell her by men, but she also gained pleasure from the look on account of it making her "feel pretty at the same time." contending with the male gaze in such a manner did not, as Cahill (2004 p. 50) would promulgate, "preclude the possibility of the . . . woman actually enjoying and taking pleasure in being gazed upon." Consistent with Foucauldian power-resistance relations (Foucault 1988), the gaze can be seen to percolate around this interplay between the gratifying and the grievous, in this instance a gratification premised upon heterosexism. Amber and Stephie claim that the threat of potentially not 'living up' to the standards demarcated by the look could be offset and possibly redeemed by being scrutinised and then applauded for your compliance and 'appropriate' performance of femininity. Within the two and fro of darting looks they experienced both pleasure and pain as their conversation below suggests:

Amber Just to look good and you like compare yourself with other people and you think well [interrupted]

Stephie Why can't I look like you?

Amber Yeah and you want them as well to think you look good. Like if you think someone else looks good, like amazing, and they told you that they thought you looked good you'd be like, oh my god she said I looked good

Stephie If someone stunning came up to you, you'd just be like 'hi,' you'd try to look like really nice to like impress them and be like I look like you too

Concurrently, and perhaps more frequently (Aqua's account is remarkable in this regard), pleasure was derived in anticipation of the gaze, and pain felt once the back-and-forth practices of looking commenced:

Roxy What I feel is that say I like look in the mirror and I was going out to like a party or something umm I might feel, when I'm on my own, I might feel like nice-ish. Like nicer than I did before say I had like make up on and I was wearing a nice outfit. But then when I go out and see other people you think suddenly oh no I'm ugly again

Lottie [agreeing and extending Roxy's feelings] Oh no I've got the wrong outfit on

Me So Roxy you compare yourself to other people?

Roxy Well it's not that I do, like I I like really want to, it's that it just does, I do naturally

Lucy Yeah

Roxy Like you look at them and they are wearing like a really nice outfit and just look amazing and then you think about like earlier when you thought you looked pretty, but then you're just like no I don't not at all

Robin I agree with Roxy, because when I like go out or when I like came to the year eight week umm, I uhh, I thought I wore something like really nice and when I came in everyone was wearing wearing like designer stuff and I was just like oh cause [sic] they were wearing really nice things

Gratification can be read into Roxy's and Robin's depiction of the process of getting ready, but in exploring the distinction between this 'process' and the 'product' or performance of feminine beautification (Cahill 2004) this enjoyment can be seen to be disrupted. The female body, when reduced to the focus of a look, became consumable by others, and it was the fulfilment of this requirement that dislocated pleasure and pain—having inherent meanings for the sculpting of the girls' subjectivities. For Roxy and Robin the pleasure of getting ready, looking “pretty,” and/or wearing a “really nice” outfit was met with discomfort and discontentment as they engaged in gendered gazing. As Roxy disclosed, they “think about like earlier when you thought you looked pretty but then you're just like no, I don't, not at all.” Intriguingly the shackles of satisfaction, that were derived and emanated from looking, comparing and meeting the desired standards of the gaze that fixes and at once was fixed by the female, were loosened and fractured in the practices of looking Roxy and Robin engaged. The pleasure obtained and elicited from the appreciative consumption of the body was unsettled as they troubled the ownership of the gaze on the basis of their personal internalisation of certain 'norms' and their subsequent participation in their own “oppression as their only means of seeming to have some authority of their own” (MacCannell and Flower MacCannell 1993, p. 214).

In terms of conceptualising the theoretical but also illustrating the everyday complexities of the gaze, I feel that Aqua's commentary encapsulated not only the dyad of the gratifying and grievous, but also the disordered practices of looking:

I feel most confident when I think I look nice, even if I don't if I think I look ok.
You walk differently which means more *boys notice you* which means you, it's all like a cycle, if you look, *if you feel confident because you feel pretty boys love you which makes you feel pretty which makes you more confident*

Aqua, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010, my emphasis.

In this regard Aqua's subjective position was both challenged and maintained by the fiction of a gaze that was at once male, female, internal, external, pleasurable, and painful. The girls managed their performance of a conventionally (hetero)sexy feminine subjectivity in acquiesce with the matrix of lens', power configurations and affective responses that constituted the gaze. It is with these ideas in the fore that I now attend to the specific sites or locations that befell the gaze and how these were toiled with and

invested upon the young female body beautiful through the micro political negotiations of diet and exercise regimes.

4.4 TECHNOLOGY OF FEMININITY: DIET, EXERCISE & THE BODY BEAUTIFUL

The perfect body?

Paris A thin body, no flab and a bit toned and have like nice legs but not chunky

Eva Nice and tanned

Paris Nice, tanned legs and body

Eva Yeah

Paris Yeah and like have the right features on your face [giggles]. Like nothing too big or small

India All the teachers are like saying in our PSHE lessons, 'there's no such thing as a perfect body'

Paris There is

India But there's like features of a perfect body

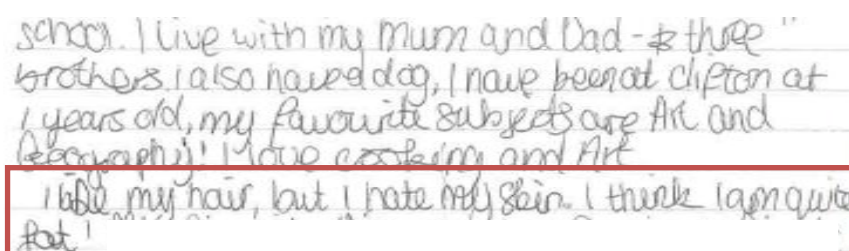
Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Skinny, medium height umm not big big boobs but kind of big boobs

Charlotte, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

A thin waist they go out at the hips and have big boobs [does a silhouette with her hands]; she goes in and out at the right places [the group laugh]

As mentioned previously, the body as it was represented in and through (popular) physical culture was “a continuously present resource, which provide[s] adolescents with points of reference for themselves and orientations to each other” (Kirk and Tinning 1994, p. 620). Kirk and Tinning (1994) stipulate, and I have noted previously, that the young female does not uncritically appropriate these cultural resources, nonetheless when the foci shifted from the examination of the celebrity, mediated body that is so pervasive, to that of their own, individual body, the resistance to the ‘normalised’ body beautiful was shrouded in contradiction. The responses of the girls when comprehending their own bodies implied a much more intricate picture of their physical subjectivities. This was clearly indicated in the personal biographies they wrote for me and the responses elicited from the free writing task during the first ‘Getting to Know Each Other’ workshop:

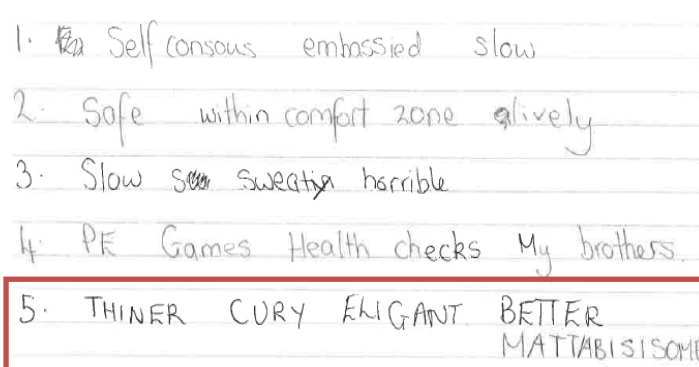


school. I live with my Mum and Dad - ~~3~~ three " brothers. I also have a dog, I have been at Clifton at 1 years old, my favourite subjects are Art and Geography! I love cooking and Art

I like my hair, but I hate my skin. I think I am quite fat!

Figure 6. Roxy's personal biography. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

Sometimes I wish my body ...



1. ~~Be~~ Self conscious embarrassed slow
2. Safe within comfort zone lively
3. Slow ~~see~~ sweating horrible
4. PE Games Health checks My brothers.
5. THINNER CURVY ELEGANT BETTER
METABOLISM

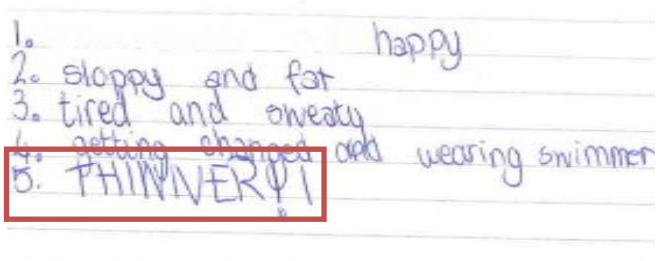
[thinner, curvy, elegant, better metabolism?]

Figure 7. India's free writing responses. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

An understanding of the young girl as an adolescent is framed throughout both popular and academic discourse by a recourse to the entanglement, development and comprehension of their bodies (Oliver and Lalik 2001). Westernised, feminised

adolescence is characteristically marked as initiating worry, the body is voluntarily and enthusiastically evaluated on a personal level and compared to others precisely at a time when it is changing physiologically (Oliver 1999) and in ways that are not always comparable with the lithe, slim, taut image that pervades consumer culture and is articulated across the mediascape (Sassatelli 1999). For the girls their knowledge and uptake of the body depicted throughout midriff advertising (Gill 2009), was apparent in their aspirations for how they wished their bodies were:

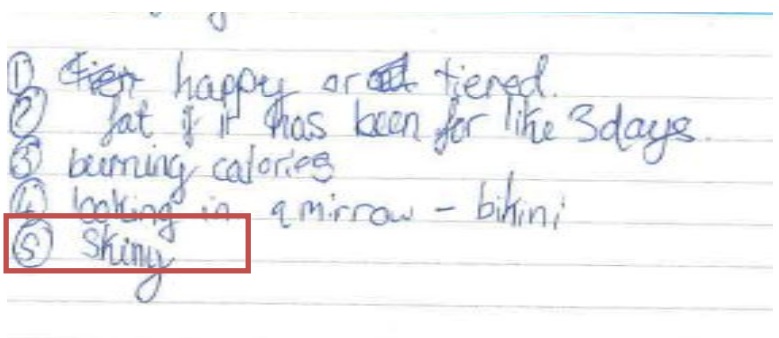
Sometimes I wish my body . . .



1. happy
2. sloppy and fat
3. tired and sweaty
4. getting changed and wearing swimmer
5. THINNER!

Figure 8. Nina's free writing responses. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

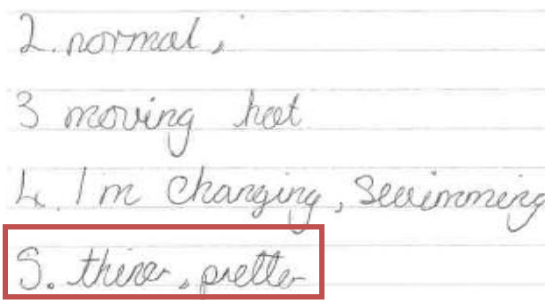
Sometimes I wish my body . . .



1. ~~thin~~ happy or ~~at~~ tired.
2. fat if it has been for like 3 days.
3. burning calories
4. looking in a mirror - bikini
5. Skinny

Figure 9. Lucy's free writing responses. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

Sometimes I wish my body . . .



2. normal,
3 moving hot
4. I'm changing, Seeinning
5. thinner, prettier

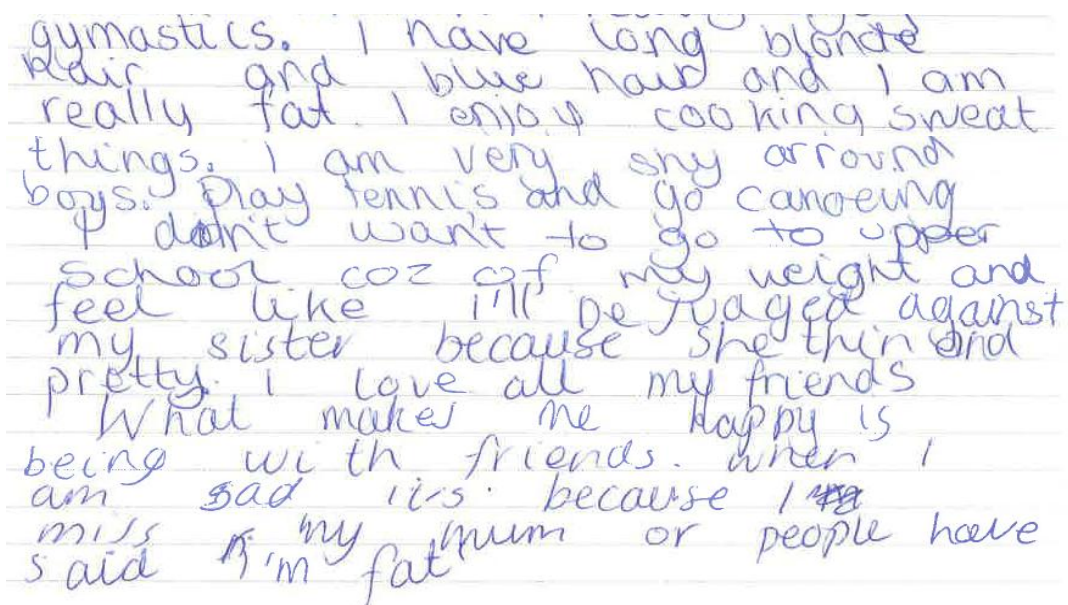
Figure 10. Charlotte's free writing responses. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

The upsurge in the personal and cultural commitment to and comprehension of the body has undoubtedly led to increased scholarly engagement that, to restate Pilcher (2007), apprehends ‘body work’ as being continual. The body thus is considered a partial, incomplete corporeal-cultural entity. Having noted how the girls deployed (popular) physical cultural forms as a technology of feminist critique, one that constituted them as knowable subjects making informed ‘choices,’ space is also required to take more seriously, in the style of Sparkes (1999, p. 18), the subjective experiences of the lived body. It is in doing so that ruptures and tensions emerge that speak to how the girls, and myself, “understand the multiple and diverse ways in which people experience their bodies and how these interact to shape identities and selves over time and in specific contexts.” By focusing now on the girls’ own body narratives, it is possible to observe how the stories they choose to tell bordered the stories of the body they were told, elucidating how they “impose[d] order on our embodied experiences and make sense of events and actions in our lives” (Sparkes 1999, p. 18).

The body of the school girl, how it is experienced and talked about, is dependent upon the distribution of power that is invariably linked to prevailing social ‘norms’ (Evans, Davis and Rich 2009). These ‘norms’ may be explicit within, for example, school policy concerning how the body is dressed, and crafted, through school uniforms and the regulation of hair length, make up use and body piercing. Alternatively they may be implicitly felt through peer interaction or the corporeal presence that is woven into school pedagogy in light of political and social agendas regarding health, illness and the ‘risky’ body (Evans et al. 2009). Body image—“a mental image of one’s body as it appears to others” (Featherstone 2010, p. 193)—concerns impact, and are impacted by, the present juncture in which adolescent women and girls matter to global capital and they embody a

position as both a valuable member of the labour force and as a commodity (Harris 2004a, b; McHugh et al. 2008). Contextualising this then, the body and our preoccupation with it can be seen to be formulated upon not only its readiness for consumption, but its malleability to consumer demands and as a credential for employment. Such developments, according to Evans et al. (2009, p. 401) locate body-pedagogies within everyday life so that the routine and relentless investment in the body can be understood in the “interests of pre- or proscribed ideals (for example, around employment or health)” and, in more general terms, the *bionormal*.

The body, its size and shape is therefore omnipresent throughout contemporary society and in the UK we experience a barrage of information regarding our correct body management; this is more often than not directed towards and approximates a cultural ‘thin ideal’ (Carey et al. 2010; Oliver 1999). Any reading of the new girl order therefore must acknowledge the centrality of the body in a patriarchal society that narrowly defines the ideal. With Adams and Bettis (2003, pp. 87-88), the girls in this study “play an active role in reconstituting ideal femininity as they resist, rethink . . . revision” and (re)affirm their gendered selves. So while offering critique of the images they consumed, their own lived experiences of their bodies—and the stories they told me about their bodies as part of their personal biographies—revealed the ways in which they were also constrained by these discourses and discursive practices:



gymnastics. I have long blonde hair and blue hair and I am really fat. I enjoy cooking sweet things. I am very shy around boys. I play tennis and go canoeing. I don't want to go to upper school coz of my weight and feel like I'll be judged against my sister because she's thin and pretty. I love all my friends. What makes me happy is being with friends. When I am sad it's because I miss my mum or people have said I'm fat.

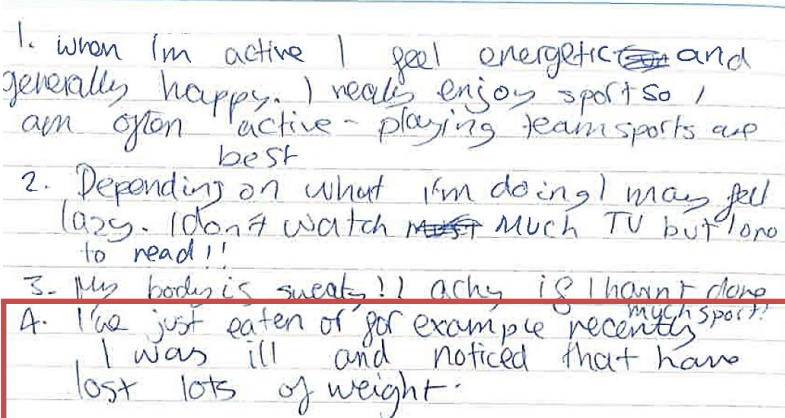
Figure 11. Lucy's personal biography. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

Lucy's consistent reference to her weight and her perceived fat body, a body that at one point was considered to the "size of an elephant" (Lucy, Workshop 2, 6th May 2010) highlighted her felt body inadequacies and (re)confirmed the 'normalised' body as that which was thin. The girls' willing ambition to obtain this more desirable body was apparent in their monitoring of their own physicality and the practices engaged to modify it. The body became a site of surveillance and the smallest changes in their physical form were noticed and scrutinised as the excerpts that follow appertain:

- Monique I think in the morning everyone's tummy's like flatter [everyone agrees] and then you don't want to eat because you know it's going to get bigger and then by the end of the day it's bigger than it was
- Amelia And then it gets flatter again
- Charlotte But no you're like it might not go flatter as much and then some days you're like skinnier than others

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

I notice my body most when . . .



1. when I'm active I feel energetic ~~and~~ and generally happy. I really enjoy sport so I am often active - playing team sports are best

2. Depending on what I'm doing I may feel lazy. I don't watch ~~much~~ much TV but I love to read!!

3. My body is sweaty!! achy if I haven't done ^{much sport!}

4. I've just eaten or for example recently I was ill and noticed that have lost lots of weight.

Figure 12. Kate's free writing responses. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

Within appearance cultures like that of the school (Carey et al. 2010), a shared ideal was seen to be enacted and taken up. Through attention to their own and each others' bodies, the girls actively engaged the "pursuit of desirability" (Carey et al. 2010, p. 3) in ways that

felt self-motivated. Conversant with Foucault's research trajectories, regulation in this sense stemmed from the monitoring of the 'self' in light of the perceived risk and threat of deviation, rather than originating from external sources (see chapter three). To that end the endorsement of a specific appearance should be understood in terms of the girls' continual references back to their body and the bodies of 'others' as Aqua and Lottie delineated:

I don't mind being quite small but I am always like consciously worried that I am going to get fat. Cause [sic] I think because I'm quite petite at the moment I think and that's fine, but I am always worried that I will get fat and short fat people, I don't know, I'm always scared that's going to happen . . . they look quite funny

Aqua, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

I don't know I've kind of got over the fact that I am never going to be small and petite, it sucks but like umm so probably [I'd like to be] like really tall and like really slim and like aww she's like really pretty and like natural . . . I would like to be a bit like Monique because she is not too tall and she's really skinny

Lottie, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Whilst reiterating the point made previously, comments such as this are also insightful in terms of reading the incongruities experienced daily by this group of girls. They often talked about not wanting or liking the skinny celebrities in magazines and in games such as "We Cheer" (see *Technologies of Femininity: [Popular] Physical Culture*), yet they readily compared themselves to their friends and noted their desire to be "really skinny." Once more the discourses of femininity were taken on board in different and complex ways by the young girls, they were not passive consumers but rather they actively, (un)critically, and in ways specific to their own biographies, gave meanings to their bodily experiences (McHugh et al. 2008; Wright, O'Flynn and Macdonald 2006). By the same token, based on these circulating corporeal discourses of femininity—particularly those concerning diet and weight management (Johns and Johns 2000)—the girls, as embodied agents, augmented their perception of the body-as-a-project by thematically reflecting and then calling upon socially situated knowledge, power, truth discourses to maintain, mould and sculpt the physical into a form conducive with the cultural (Crossley 2004; Pine 2001; Rail and Harvey 1995). In line with previous research, one of the main practices engaged

in order to achieve or maintain the body beautiful was through the modification and manipulation of food intake (Liimakka 2008). Once more this was encapsulated in a conversation between Aqua and Lottie:

- Aqua I often can't do much sport at home because I am often on the train to see my dad or something or in the car and so I think that's, that might be sometimes why I don't eat as much because I feel because I can't do anything to burn the food off because I am always in the car or on the train umm I can't eat so much
- Lottie Eat celery
- Me Celery?
- Lottie You burn calories when you eat celery

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

The girls spoke out against the (re)presentation of the overly skinny celebrity body but this stood in contrast to their own personal appropriation of a 'normative' thin ideal that shaped their conception of desirable young femininity. Considering herself an *expert*, in terms of the calories consumed, Lottie personified the authoritative discourses of healthism that proliferate. The girls seemed to inhabit a position as knowledgeable subjects who managed their food intake in ways that were presumed to maintain a specific subjectivity and avoid, at all costs, a fat body representative of deviance:

- Me So what then, and I know this might sound like an obvious question, but if that's the desirable body then what's kind of the body that you don't want?
- Charlotte Fat and that's about it
- ...
- Stephie If if you like wake up one morning and you like think you feel a bit [interrupted]

- Amber You feel energetic?
- Stephie Or you feel you're [interrupted]
- Charlotte You feel you're fat?
- Stephie Yeah yeah, you think you're a bit podgy then like you'll like try a little bit extra for the exercise front. Like maybe try like, I would try harder in games, run more in games than you usually do and I'd just be like yeah
- Jasmine I just try and eat a bit less
- Amber I'd just eat a bit less, not have so much lunch, don't have a pudding at lunch. I mean I walk to school and back everyday
- Ameila It makes you feel better doesn't it?

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

Whereas Stephie reconciled the body dissatisfaction she felt due to feeling “a bit podgy” by trying harder in games, Amber managed the same phenomenon by not eating “so much lunch.” In both instances the girls engaged particular strategies to manage their bodies; conversations such as these brought to the fore the manipulation and modifications present in their everyday lives (Foucault 1988). Diet and exercise thus became technologies of femininity that were intricately interwoven throughout the formation of the body beautiful. Society’s nice girl and ‘can-do’ girl (Harris, 2004a), constructed a sense of her physical ‘self’ through surveillance, employing technologies of specialised knowledge and as a result undertaking specific, specialised even, corrective measures (Duits 2008; Foucault 1979).

4.5 TECHNOLOGY OF FEMININITY: AESTHETIC STYLISATION

Young femininity, that Angela McRobbie may term the ‘spectacularly feminine’ (2009, p. 60), is predicated upon the pervasiveness of consumer culture and the resultant commandeering and utilisation of technologies of the self: technologies of femininity.

Femininity as discourse and discursive practice focuses our analytic attention (Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie 2005) to the “knowledges, practices, and strategies that manufacture and normalize the feminine body: those techniques, actions and adornments that are recognizably female” (Cole 1993, pp. 86-87). The girls maintained the feminine body via continuous body management. Building on the previous discussion of the literal sculpting, carving and maintenance of the corporeal, the physical form, the idea of the body as a marker of social status is now furthered. I want to attend to those products that touch the body, enfold it, swathe it, work upon and through it and imbue it with significance in a gender specific way (Pettinger 2005). Through continuous investment the body performs femininity in a manner that is germane to certain historical and cultural determinants, consequently Cole (1993) indicates that the ‘making,’ ‘becoming,’ ‘performing’ of the recognisably feminine body requires individual labour and the conspicuous consumption of products of femininity. Hence I now critically engage with the technologies of aesthetic stylisation that were deployed by the girls in ways that offered certain ‘freedoms’ and authority to them as consumers (McRobbie 1997c).

The central tenets of the analysis fall on the appearance and adornment of the body through clothing ‘choices’ as well as make up, hair and beauty regimes. I will augment the theoretical consideration of these technologies of femininity by locating these performances and moments of feminine (re)presentation, within the lived experiences of the school girl, noting the ways in which the subjectivities sculpted were indicative of our contemporary moment and the responsabilisation of the girl. Throughout I am cognisant of the shifting micro-power relations that permeated and distinguished between the performance of femininity within the boundaries of the school and those that took place beyond the literal and metaphorical school walls. Guided by Best (2004) and Smith (1990), femininity is considered as both discursively organised and ordered whilst also actively (re)constituted by the girls as they participated in the ongoing production and (re)establishment of ‘appropriate’ femininity across localised sites.

4.5.1 Aesthetic Stylisation: Clothing

[T]he concrete issues of dress, clothing tastes, and public appearances have been encoded in a panoply of folk theories concerning topics such as the morality of consumption; conditions of self-worth; the pursuit of individuality; the relation of appearance to deeper character traits; the dynamics of social relationships, gender roles, sexuality, standards of taste,

economic equality, and social class standing; and the societal effects of capitalism and mass media (Thompson and Haytko 1997, p. 15).

The notion that one can ‘consume oneself into being’ (Walkerdine 2003, p. 247) is perhaps indicative of our historical present, and with appearance now being suggestive of the ‘essence’ of the female, the “contextual connection between a construct of the woman and a presentation of the woman” (Lemish 2003, p. 20) is pertinent. Through the consumption and application of ‘products’ the woman invests in the ‘aesthetic labour’ of the ‘self’ (Pettinger 2005) that is, she has at her disposal the skills, knowledge and resources (material and psychological) required to perform a particular version of femininity (Pettinger 2005). The adornment and manipulation of clothing was one way in which the ‘self,’ this feminine subjectivity, was consumed into being; as a field of representation, fashion has inherently fraught meanings with regard to the construction of femininity (Evans and Thornton 1991). Lemish (2003) traces the historical meanings entrenched in clothing as a technique or apparatus of defining and differentiating between people: their roles, status, gender, their (non-)respectability. For the girls the meanings attributed to clothing were framed in discourses of ‘looking good,’ then again as the dialogue below alludes, their comprehension of fashion and how it framed their experiences was ongoing. They called upon each other to clarify points and they collectively realised their female subjectivity through clothing:

- Amber [discussing the females in magazines] Also what they were wearing, their style made a difference
- Me What they were wearing made a difference?
- Amber Yeah
- Me Why does that make a difference?
- Amber Well if it looks good on them then they’ll look good, well generally. But if they wear like a totally manky [sic] outfit then they’ll look manky [sic]. Unless you’re like amazing at pulling off like manky [sic] outfits

- Charlotte [questions Amber's opinion by noting that the fashion] Is really baggy at the moment, but you like have to be skinny to pull that off, so you could wear ugly stuff and look good
- Me Is that kind of a fashion thing then?
- Alexia Yeah
- Roxy Like Lady GaGa kinda [sic] pulls it off by wearing really random, really weird stuff because she is known for wearing really weird stuff so she looks quite cool and nice sometimes
- Kate You know when we picked the photos how much of it was based, do you think, on what they wore?
- Me On what they wore?
- Kate Yeah, cause [sic] it's gonna [sic] make a difference isn't it?

Workshop 4, 20th May 2010.

For me, this kind of talk is important to emphasise as it foregrounds how the girls communally 'worked' to make sense of and articulate what being a young woman means in our neoliberal, media driven consumer culture. Therefore these moments of reciprocity in the workshop dialogue represented a meaningful space in which the girl herself became centralised (Best 2004). The narratives presented during the *Critical Corporal Closure* offered moments and slippages between the wider discourses (technologies of subjectivity) and the 'lived' experiences of their bodies (technologies of femininity). Seemingly unaware of the larger cultural m  le to which their clothing and 'choice' of clothing spoke, the girls discussed fashion as one opportunity available to them for the public presentation of the 'self.' For them clothing was an important aspect in their performance of a feminine subjectivity, a factor that was accentuated by the presence of a school uniform. Their negotiation with the discourses embedded around femininity and dress combined with the requirements of the school uniform, not only provided a sense of regulation, rendering their bodies docile, it also constructed home-clothes day and out-of-school fashion as extremely important spaces for the display of their femininity. This was a space that was

readily invested in and clearly distinguished from the space which produced surveyed and governed bodies (in terms of clothing):

Lottie Umm like, I feel better when I'm in my home clothes because like I know what looks good on me. But I hate the school uniform because it makes me look so big

...

Kate I think it is really good having school uniform otherwise girls would spend so long getting changed

Lottie [continuing her conversation about the school uniform on her]
Urgh, it just makes me look so much bigger than everyone else,
I hate it

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

The narratives presented point towards an active struggle in interpretation and a series of autonomy and conformity issues that were at once juxtaposed (Thompson and Haytko 1997). Kate's proposition that the school uniform operated as a regulative function ensuring that girls do not overly invest in gendered performance was furthered by the contention that "when you're in school uniform I don't think about my body" (Paris, Focus group 2, 28th June 2010). Conceiving of and reconciling the uniformed body as an invisible one, implied a safe space—a heterotopia (for a full discussion of this concept see Evans, Riley and Shankar 2010b and Hook and Vrdolijak 2002)—in which the girls could live irrespective of these otherwise incongruous circumstances. Alternatively, Lottie offered a competing narrative, her exclamations conflated clothing and the body; the school uniform in this instance offered no place to hide. Discourses of an 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' body politic—in terms of size, shape, gender, sexuality, race and class—were not considered disembodied rather they were read through the clothes, irrespective of the fact that every girl wears (or is expected to wear) the same uniform. With these (dis)continuities in mind, clothing (as a technology of femininity) was as Tseelon (1995, p. 122) suggested, "a dynamic site of struggle for control of the power to define selves and situations." What can be garnered from the two narratives discussed is how contextualised the embodied performance of femininity was for the girls.

Whether the school, and school uniform specifically, provided a site removed from societal expectations concerning young femininity or not, interrogation of the home-clothes day and the opportunities to dress the body outside of school regulation articulated how clothing operated to “secure girls’ focus on constructing and reconstructing their bodies as feminine bodies” (Best 2004, p. 196). In a moment of late capitalism, Western economies are buoyed by the fashion and consumption practices that are all-encompassing and, as McRobbie (2008) contends, these intersect with the construction of the (wage-earning) female subject’s identity (Gleeson and Firth 2004). Mobilising a consumer ethos of the unlimited and feely available requires, Miller and Rose (1997) would argue, an individual’s engagement in their own ‘sculpting,’ their own monitoring and the deployment of specific technologies of the self. Crafting narratives of the active young girl was one particular methodological strategy that I employed during the collaborative workshops (see appendix five). Although Paris invested in and carried out this task in an unpredicted manner, in her description of a ‘fictional’ shopping trip she alluded to, and reinforced, how shopping for clothes and the ‘choices’ being made were part of the (re)presentation of an ‘appropriate self,’ in this instance a more ‘girly’ subject position:

Once there was a girl called Zoe, she was shopping in the Mall, walking around the shops seeing what she would like to wear. She is in Primark seeing what clothes, would look good on her. She is wondering if her dress would look terrible on her and when she would wear it she would look like a idiot and be laughed at, so she was making her choices very wisely. As she passed a shop window, she sees her self, wearing the same, old boring clothes, a black T-shirt, and blue jeans, her mum suggested that she should buy new clothes as a treat for a early birthday present so she took that on board to improve her apinence. Zoe has dark black hair and blue eyes, her hair was long and wavy, but instead of having it down she has it up in a pony tail. She had a ~~unique~~ a unique look about her but always wanted to be someone else. In the end she starts being more girly

The End

Figure 13. Paris' active woman narrative. Workshop 2, 6th May 2010.

Highlighting the interconnections between consumption, fashion and identity (Smith Maguire and Stanway 2008) this extract simultaneously reads as distinctly gendered. The girls' engagement with fashion and clothes was indicative of Arthurs' (2003, p. 87) argument concerning the ironic oscillations that implicate "bourgeois women who . . . are complicit with the aestheticised values of consumer culture and its unequal structuring of the "look"." The notion of an oscillation between the girls as both object and subject of their own 'self' gestures towards Thompson and Haytko's (1997) research in which the consumption practices associated with fashion provide citizens with a plurality of subject positions that can juxtapose either agentic behaviour with everyday conformity or vice versa. Added to this is the specific ways in which the girls seemed to be engaging and negotiating with clothing as a technology of their own femininity. In other words, through their excited and animated chatter their deployment of clothing as a purposeful act of understanding became apparent:

- Amber I take forever to decide what I am going to wear, I go through everything in my wardrobe
- Stephie Oh yeah and when you get there you realise, you realise, that you're wearing the wrong thing. On home clothes day that is one of the, like, only times that you get to like, [someone interjects: "impress"] that the boys can see you in what you wear. The boys can see what your wardrobe is like
- Jasmine And then it is really annoying because you can't wear stuff in school that you would wear out of school
- Amelia It's so stressful
- Stephie So that's one of your chances that that the boys can see what your wardrobe is like so you sort of spend ages. Like the day before evening you spend picking [Ruby interjects: "I do that"] what you're going to wear
- Charlotte I spend hours and hours and hours and hours
- Amelia I use my sister
- Jasmine I find a really nice top and then I can never find something some really nice trousers
- Amelia Exactly I always ask my sister to help me always and I use her clothes
- Charlotte And they get really pissed off
- Amelia Yes she gets really angry with me because I don't like what she's got for me to wear and she's like 'but you look nice'

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

Located within these conversations was an awareness that there are decisions to be made—‘choices’—that entail consequences if “you’re wearing the wrong thing.” Moreover, there is a sense that there is also knowledge to be possessed personally or garnered from an *expert* other (Rose 1989). The aesthetic labour outlined above points to the highly gendered, time consuming and on occasion troublesome performances of girlhood (Pettinger 2005). With Pettinger (2005) therefore, clothes are considered as much more than banal, insignificant material objects, rather they are invested with and are part of the gendered power lines that are “prevalent at particular historical and geographical junctures” (p. 461). Subsequently, dressing in “trackies . . . and a baggy top” (Paris, below) entailed a certain subject position and performance that was different and distinct from the clothing that would be worn if the girls were out in public, functioning under the assumed gaze of others:

- Paris Yeah in my own clothes I feel more, I feel more umm, I do I feel more like I need to impress people. I have to like dress to impress if that makes sense?
- Me So what do you do then, what’s different like when you’re in your home clothes, you’re not coming to school do you do different things?
- Paris Well when I’m just at home, when it’s like, when I’m going out I really like make myself look nice
- Me So what do you do to do that?
- Paris I don’t know I just put nice clothes on and like I don’t know, when I’m at home I just put my trackies on and a baggy top but at, like umm, when we go out or something I just look nice. I try and look nice because I don’t want people thinking I’m like [trails off]
- India Image is a lot in Franklin

Paris Yeah image is a lot because you can only base someone on their image. So if you saw a right hobo [sic] in the street you wouldn't say he's lovely and clean would you?

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

The clothing practices of the girls reiterated their desire to be 'normal,' nice and to conform to a certain image that was interlaced throughout their accounts. Through clothing the body the young girls were able to explore and publicly present their femininity in ways that they felt were autonomous, but that were also shrouded in contemporary discourses that formulate a social understanding of women.

Remaining mindful of the possible tensions between the participants' clothing practices and the researchers' reading of them that are outlined by Gleeson and Firth (2004), I infer that the management of clothing and fashion was a site invested with the power to prescribe certain versions of young femininity. The performance of gender as experienced through clothing can be implicitly interpreted and inscribed along the lines of the sexiness of the clothing, the age of the female and how this in turn might be read. I am attentive to Gleeson and Firth's (2004) contentions at this point, not because the girls actively resisted the reading I offer, but rather because they never fully (and explicitly) noted the sexual significance of their clothing practices. For me, an imperative of cultural feminism is noting and operating within these power dynamics, not privileging one discourse or position over another but rather acknowledging their presence and considering their implications (Arthurs 2003).

As cultural constructs capable of representing, and addressing femininity as a burgeoning responsibility for women; for the young women at Franklin School especially (Evans and Thornton 1991), clothing and fashion became significant discursive practices. Dress, as a product of different styles and colours, was a meaningful signifier of gender, marking or distinguishing between males and females, but also as Paris (below) disclosed it can also differentiate between "forms of femininity" (Gleeson and Firth 2004, p. 104) to which I would add, 'normative' femininity:

But you know the people, like thinking about people in our school, people who wear not different, I don't want to say *weird* because I don't know but like diff . . .

let's just say different types of clothes. I don't just don't they look wrong, yeah they just don't look nor [doesn't finish word] I don't want to, I don't know they just don't look normal they just don't look like what normal teenage girls would wear

Paris, Focus group 2, 28th June 2010, my emphasis.

The sexiness of clothing and certain styles can be comprehended according to the age appropriateness of these items as they were conceived and consumed by the girls. Rather than carve out and verbalise explicitly a prerequisite to be (hetero)sexy, the girls laid claim to what they were not, or did not want to be considered (Gleeson and Firth 2004). As such, immature identities were apportioned to childish fashions that “you would wear when you were like five” (Paris, below). The dialogue between Eva, Paris and India grounds this idea through discussion of another girl’s clothing practices:

Eva She probably wouldn't like what I wore because it wouldn't be her style. But I know everybody has to have a different style, but I don't think she would wear anything that we wore

Paris It's like the stuff you would wear when you were like five, just that patterns you know when you have jeans when you're like like, the patterns on the flowers on the jeans

Eva And butterflies and stuff

India Roses she wears a lot of roses

Paris And she wears like not colour co-ordinated

Eva She wears a lot of purple and green and it just looks a bit too much

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Intriguingly the clothing chosen for critique was not questioned for its representation of femininity, instead it was notable as a result of the *type* of femininity that it displayed, with Gleeson and Firth (2004, p. 105) this was a femininity that could be considered “passive, innocent, asexual, and immature.” The girl who wears garments styled with “flowers,”

“butterflies” and “roses” was held in a position of the ‘other’ at this point, she was not conveying an ‘appropriate’ version of girlhood. However, to infer from this rejection of the overtly ‘girlie’ and ‘childish’ that the girls must, as a consequence, favour a more mature, sexualised version of femininity would be amiss too, as became clear during a conversation in the same focus group:

Eva That was a bit like yesterday on the coach when Sammi said ‘oh you look sixteen’

Paris Yeah, this girl said I look sixteen and I was like [makes a sound of disgust]

Me What? Do you take that as a compliment or an insult?

Eva No she took it as offense

Me Why?

Paris I started mouthing off to her you should have heard me [laughs]

Me Why did you take it as an offense?

Paris I don’t know because I just think that I wanna [sic] be the same as everyone else and it’s not like I wear make up and short skirts. I wear, I wear what everyone else wears but I just look older

India Yeah you look fine

Paris I look I look, I wear normal. Yesterday I wore, I wore, tracksuit bottoms really long but then I thought oh my god where’s my shorts? Everyone was wearing shorts once again. Then Eva said ‘role them up high’ and I rolled them up like to here [above the knee]

India They were just above your knee

Paris And then I wore a tank top, a black one umm, didn't show anything or anything it's it's like that and I wore that and I said 'oh what am I wearing now? I'm not wearing any tarty [sic] stuff.' And I said that to her I said that to her face

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

An overtly (hetero)sexy subjectivity was implied when their clothing marked their bodies as being older and standing out from others of their own age. Moreover, the silences of the text, that which is not said as much as that which was verbalised, revealed the inherent sexualised meanings attributed to certain commodities. The overtly sexualised display of femininity (for girls of their age) was conflated with certain porno-chic (Duits and van Zoonen, 2006) fashion garments. The discussion—as well as the unsaid—between the girls was abundant with references to stereotypically sexy attire and styles: centralised around the exposure of the flesh (Gleeson and Firth 2004; Lemish 2003).

A consumer culture that is increasingly targeting young women has become somehow ordinary, as has the pervasive and demanding need for the consumption of commodities in the (re)construction of the 'self.' Clothing, as a technology of femininity; a consumerable marker of an 'appropriate' and desirable femininity was deployed by the girls in ways that created polysemic readings (Lemish 2003). The girls actively engaged fashion practices to understand themselves and while they often referred to gendered and heteronormative discourses their negotiations resonated with their demonstration of 'choice' and competency.

4.5.2 Aesthetic Stylistation: Beautification

Roxy When I get up I like get dressed but then I umm, I put this like clear mascara on it's like so like. I don't always, I actually like rarely, like once a week. And then I sometimes put brown eyeliner on, but like that's again like only once a week like if I think that I look really really bad. Like one day I like thought it might look nice. And then if I've got a spot, which like I don't normally get spots, but if I did I would probably put like foundation on but like only like on the spot and like blend it in.

But I actually, not being like boastful, but I rarely get spots that I actually want to cover up

Aqua I always get spots, I always put concealer on I always, always

Lottie I never wear concealer or foundation because it covers it up [the skin] and makes it not breathe

Aqua I've got stuff [products] that makes it better

Lottie Aqua that stuff doesn't make it better, I only ever wear eye make up I never wear anything else

Aqua I wear lip gloss

Roxy It depends if like my hair, like. I hate it because sometimes in the shower, like I'm showering and I forgot to put conditioner in the like shower because sometimes it might be like in the other bathroom and if I only use shampoo my hair is like greasy urghh as soon as I dry it. So I like try to wash it again, but like umm, if my hair were to be greasy like yeah, I would like always put it up. But if it's not I would sometimes wear it down and I would just like brush it a bit and then sometimes I straighten my hair before the mornings, but it doesn't really work. And then like, exercise wise, I do school stuff but then I always go on the trampoline after and like I suppose hoola hoop is not really exercise but it's fun for me so I always do that yeah so that's pretty much it . . . I put moisturiser on because I have, I get really dry skin, but then I umm, because I also have eczema but it's more dry skin on my face. But then I [giggles nervously], this might sound really weird, but I I found my mum's like anti-wrinkle cream, but it's, I only put it there [indicates to under her eyes] because like obviously they are bags but I thought they were wrinkles. This was ages ago so I like always put that on now

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Aesthetic stylisation is characterised by late capitalist consumptive practices—or lack of—that can become a means to experience the body through conformity and involvement or ‘distanciation’ (Featherstone 1991, cited by Arthurs 2003). These undulations between complicit consumption and critique are particularly apparent within the consumptive practices of the new middle-upper classes; those knowledgeable and knowing consumers (Arthurs 2003). Accordingly, a women’s ‘participation’ in the practices of beautification presents a dialectic: the creation and stylising of the ‘self’ as an active process of self-investment, of knowledge and skill acquisition depends upon and is already constituted by adherence to the market. So the focus on individuality and a women’s active participation in the sculpting of a desirable femininity (itself a contested issue as the complex experiences in this thesis suggests) is co-ordinated, in these instances especially, with her decision to purchase or not make up and hair care products. Any sense of subversion then is read back onto the ethos of neoliberal market imperatives (Smith 1990).

Beautification practices engaged and deployed as technologies of femininity are understood as being at once a matter of individual imperative and constraint (Pettinger 2005); the girls to lesser or greater degrees deployed specific discursive practices in their presentation of the ‘self’ as a female subject. Having learnt the feminised skills of hair styling, make up and having acquired knowledge about general beautification and the performance of the ‘self,’ the girls then called upon these apparatus and techniques at will within their own everyday lives. But, as the predominant narrative revealed, they also provided a discourse through which the bourgeois (hetero)sexy subjectivities (of the girls in this study)—as constrained and contained—were navigated and were distinguished from alternative and ‘inappropriate’ femininity. To that end, and through my probing into the routinised utilisation of beautification products and practices, I brought to light irregularities, discrepancies and ruptures that required multiple readings.

Bartky (1990) cites at length the regimen of aesthetic stylisation undertaken by women and in doing so renders visible the notable conflation of the technology of femininity as a theoretical construct and the technology of femininity as literal imposition of electrical and material accessories to aid in the process of beautification:

A women must learn the proper manipulation of a large number of devices—the blow dryer, styling brush, curling iron, hot curlers, wire curlers, eye-liner, lipliner, lipstick brush, eyelash curler, mascara brush—

and the correct manner of application of a wide variety of products— foundation, toner, covering stick, mascara, eye shadow, eye gloss, blusher, lipstick, rouge, lip gloss, hair dye, hair rinse, hair lightener, hair “relaxer” etc (Bartky 1990, pp. 71-72).

Interestingly, and returning to the school girl subjectivity as radically contextual, these technologies of hair styling and make up take up perhaps a more significant position than the clothing practices that were explicated previously. This according to Stephie, Monique and Charlotte was a result of the presence of their school uniform:

Stephie And then like with, if you’re wearing a school uniform there’s not much to try and impress, so you try and like make your, make your legs look nice. Roll down your socks so you can see your ankles and stuff especially, your hair, that’s the key point if you’re wearing like uniform

Monique Yeah it’s only your hair

Charlotte It’s your face basically

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

In the constant quest for a culturally prescribed ‘normative’ femininity (Black and Sharma 2001) these girls constructed and maintained their bodies, highlighting certain practices that enabled the sculpting of a desirable physical form. As such, and within the boundaries established by the wearing of a school uniform, the girls regulated their femininity via coiffure and cosmetics. They worked on and sculpted their body—their hair—as a project. This body project required constant attention to detail and monitoring especially as the girls traversed different experiences, spaces and contexts:

Me Do you spend time doing things like your hair?

Group Yeah

Me What do you do to your hair?

Paris I straighten it

India A bun sometimes

Eva I usually put it in a bun or curl it

Paris Yeah you make it all nice and if you do it wrong [trails off as
India starts to talk]

Me You what, sorry? [directed to India]

India In Franklin if there was like a school house event, like house
song or a dinner, I would definitely straighten my hair

Me Oh right you would straighten your hair?

Paris But if like I do my hair wrong in the morning just like a tiny
little bump or something I do it all over again. I don't think
about oh I could just leave it

Eva Same, if I was at home I would just leave it if I did it all messy I
wouldn't really care

Me But when you come to school?

Eva I like to be primpt [sic] and proper

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

The neoliberal subject was incentivised to become the instigator of her own body narrative, often this regulation and reflection required what appears to be an excessive scrutinising. Stephie noted, “your hair like it just makes you look and then you like tie it up and its got a bump there so you like oh no so you tie it up again and it's even worse” (Focus group 3, 29th June 2010). The discussion of hair as a commodified practice of cuts and styling was understood within the wider political, cultural and economic discourses of the feminine ideal type, individualism and consumption. Locating late capitalism in accord with this individualisation thesis (Giddens 1991), Black and Sharma (2001) discuss how beauty therapy, as a moment of leisure and lifestyle politics, has been restructured as a consequence of market demands, therefore the primary relationship that now exists is

between the individual and the market. As noted previously the girl is expected, quite literally to consume herself into being (Walkerdine 2003) and the desirable display of hair that has not “just gone past it, I hate it” (Charlotte, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010) was one of the techniques through which this was most readily achieved. For instance, the performance of femininity weaved throughout the girls’ considerations of hair cut and style as Monique’s (Focus group 3, 29th June 2010) dialogue suggests: “Yeah like my hair because I don’t have a fringe or anything looks like I’m if I have a photo like this I look like I’m bald so whenever they’re like ‘photo’ I have to go like this and put it like this [pulls her pony tail to the side to make her long hair visible].” While long hair for Monique connoted a feminine subjectivity, a sculpted, perfected, controlled, ‘non-bumpy’ version of femininity that displayed clearly an investment of time and resources resonated throughout numerous accounts.

Within the focus groups, workshops and their general conversations between themselves, the girls talked openly and freely about clothing, make up, hair styling and the function it served in terms of establishing meanings was clear. The performance and citations of the ‘normative’ within the establishment of ‘appropriate’ appearances—through the deployment of technologies of femininity—provided a reference point to which the girls readily returned (Duits 2008). Appearance differentiation was (re)constituted and (re)appropriated by certain bodies in ways that were sometimes acceptable and at other times considered as ‘inappropriate.’ What remained consistent however was that each of the girls, at some point and in some way, engaged this body-as-a-project ethos, resultantly sculpting the corporeal in a quest for ‘normalcy.’ The extended conversation between the girls exhibits not only the ease with which they disclosed this element of performative femininity but also the degree to which they embodied the subject position of the neoliberal ‘can-do’ girl (Harris 2004a), a knowing and willing biographer in their own life (body) narrative:

Me Ok so if you’re going out for something then . . . you’re going to see people what would you do?

Amber Is your hair clean?

Monique I’d wash my hair, I don’t know moisturise or something. I’d put make up on, I’d spend ages trying to find like something nice to

wear, suiting the weather, something like a skirt or something
[interrupted]

Me Error today error [indicating to my choice of black trousers on
what turned out to be a really hot day]

Monique And then yeah find something that matches it; maybe wear a
bracelet or something, earrings, shoes

Amelia Shoes are always so hard to [interrupted]

Felicity I have no shoes

Monique And then [thinking]

Me So do you think it takes quite a long time?

Monique Yeah it takes about like, and hour

Stephie Yeah it does

Jasmine If you add the shower it takes about [thinks]

Amber Ages I take forever in the shower my dad always shouts 'get out'

Jasmine I spend about forty five minutes in the shower

Stephie I blow dry and straighten my hair every, every morning my hair
goes wild

Joanna Blow drying takes so long

Felicity If I, if I don't like dry my hair it goes all curly

...

Stephie And like you try and sneak on a tiny bit of make up to try and pull it off yeah so

Amelia But if you think you look nice you feel more confident

Group Yeah

Felicity And if you don't you just [trails off as others shout out how they feel]

Charlotte You feel crap

Amber If you think you're having like a really bad hair day then you're just going to be like ohh my hair

Monique Yeah I always forget to dry my hair before I go to bed. I have a shower and I forget it and in the morning it has just got weird curls that go out like this and then like a straight bit like this

Me So do you straighten your hair?

Monique Yeah . . . but it has got like random curls in it today because I forgot

Stephie I hate it when it goes wavy

Charlotte But if you straighten it you have to get up at like really early. I have to get up at like five thirty if I want to straighten my hair

Amelia I don't, it doesn't matter for me because I have really thin hair

Me So is it it's quite kind of [interrupted]

Charlotte Traacherous

Me If you do these things for, it's quite time consuming?

- Charlotte I, I wash my hair the night before and let it dry normally so I don't have to blow dry it and everything and then umm, and then umm, uhh what do I do? And then I wake up really early to do my hair and then [trails off]
- Me Do you do anything else like if you [interrupted]
- Charlotte Make up, oh outfit

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

The performance of the ideal body of contemporary young femininity as mentioned (and evidenced in the girls' discussion above) is (re)constructed, (re)established and (re)contoured in ways that resonated with their understandings of the feminine body-subject (Cahill, 2004). This was a body that was mediated and culturally crafted, a schooled body and a readable one. Furthermore, these mechanisms in the establishment of a distinctly gendered subjectivity required energy and organisation. Bartky (1990 p. 70) alludes to a commitment to gendered-body performance that is demanding of the individual's time; "[l]ike the schoolchild or prisoner, the woman mastering good skin-care habits is put on a timetable." Theoretically framed upon Foucault's (1979, p. 6) utilisation of Leon Faucher's rules 'for the House of young prisoners in Paris,' the girls' daily lives were temporally invested in the deployment of the technologies of beautification. From taking forty five minutes or an hour in the shower, to having to wake up at five thirty in the morning in order to straighten their hair before school, some of the girls had to manage their time and aesthetic stylisation accordingly. Paris for example, invested so much time that her "mum goes mad, do you know why? I've got this wardrobe and I literally start yanking my clothes out and I pick clothes out and then I think, no I'm not going to wear that, and I put it, I just throw it back in my wardrobe" (Paris, Focus group 2, 28th June 2010).

Additionally, in discussing their daily hair and make up routines the girls mobilised a certain specialised body-knowledge and as Cahill (2004) observes, the management of the 'self' required a mastery of habits. For the girls this mastering of apparatuses was occurring at the same time that they proclaimed to already be knowledgeable. So while they noted the features of their beauty regime as showering, choosing clothing, footwear,

accessories, styling their hair and applying make up, they also negotiated with them as young girls who, in their own words, did not want to “feel crap” for having “random curls.” Moderating between their young subject position and the expectation for them to actively engage with these techniques and disciplinary practices of beautification was effectively characterised by Charlotte, and other girls, who acknowledged their individual participation, as “treacherous.”

Notwithstanding this, female beautification is oft thought of in the personal as well as social realm of experience. As a communal process it can be envisaged as a site of enjoyment, agency even (see Cahill 2004, p. 52), thus offering a space for ‘appropriate,’ ‘normative’ femininity to be collectively realised and countering, or at least speaking back to, the penal and punitive analyses within which a women’s investment in the ‘self’ is ordinarily located. Notably, Cahill’s (2004) research pays attention to the context in which these practices are carried out. Framed as a group activity (especially at a younger age) feminine beautification can be seen to counter the critiques—for example of it being labour intensive and time consuming—often directed at this form of body work:

Opinions are sought as to the suitability of this or that wrap, or the success of this or that hairdo. Decisions will be made and remade; experiments will be attempted and abandoned, and, most importantly, the participants lavish each other with attention (Cahill 2004, p. 52).

As the girls invested in and articulated the performance of young femininity through make up and hair styling, they questioned their own practices, sought reassurance from friends and imparted guidance. Lucy, a border at Franklin School, coherently outlined her hair care routine but alluded to her procedural, partial and developing utilisation of make up:

Lucy I try and have time to straighten my hair, I think of straightening my hair quite a lot. And I try to wear make up, but I don’t really like look good in it cause [sic] I can’t do make up. I know that sounds really weird but I can’t do make up

Aqua I would tell you what I think but I don’t think I have ever seen you in make up

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Although Aqua does not see herself as being in a position to provide any substantive advice on how Lucy looks “in” make up, she does contend that if she was informed on such matters she would tell her what she thought. There was a willingness shown here (one that resonated throughout the workshops and focus groups) to discuss bodies and what I am terming their aesthetic stylisation. Akin to Best’s (2004) study of the American high school prom, the girls appeared to discuss their ‘body work’ in order to not only achieve, but also establish, an idealised feminine image conducive to their own experiences. Further, and despite Charlotte’s claim that these were “treacherous” times, during the focus group discussions I observed that the girls’ engagement with these technologies of femininity were not an immediate source of displeasure. They problematised not the practices that they deployed but the practicalities of their undertaking and the actual outcome as compared to the desired one (see Kate below):

Lucy But if I wear, if I put make up on myself, I’ll look stupid. Like I sometimes ask my sister because she can do it better than me

Kate Aqua once, I wanted to put some mascara on and you put like quite thick mascara on and I just looked so different. I just didn’t like it

Aqua It’s just so like

Lottie Kate doesn’t trust me because once I was putting mascara on and she moved towards me at the same time so I poked her in the eye. It wasn’t my fault and so now she doesn’t trust me

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Participation in the beautification of the ‘self’ represented a site of contestation and struggle for the girls. The body-as-a-project to be continually sculpted was also a body project that was vying to occupy an ‘appropriate’ position—seeking reassurances as to what it was and what it was not; what it should and should not do and how it should and should not appear:

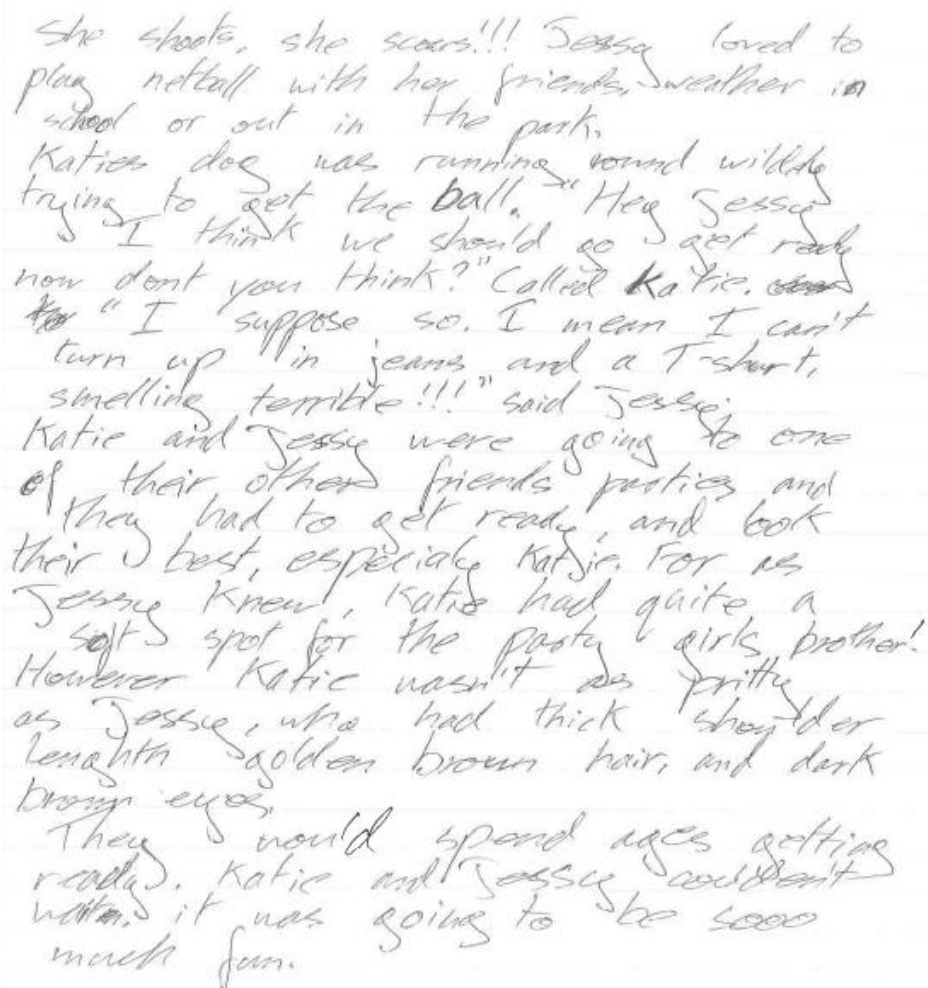
Aqua I tried fake tan last year

Lottie Did you?

Aqua Yeah, do you remember that stuff on sports day?

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Like the young girls getting ready for the American prom, the girls in this study seemed “able to demonstrate a public commitment to feminine practices, they . . . [were] also able to express their competence as beauty practitioners” (Best 2004, p. 198). The consistent location of an external and self-regulating gaze as a referent pertained to the predetermined and (re)constituted heterosexuality of gender performance, but at the same time pointed to the self-pleasure and collaborative creativity of the experience (Best 2004). To this end, Amber’s fictional narrative about a young girl being active refers to the communal crafting of femininity:



She shoots, she scores!!! Jessa loved to play netball with her friends, whether in school or out in the park. Katie's dog was running round wildly trying to get the ball. "Hey Jessa, I think we should go, get ready now don't you think?" Called Katie. "I suppose so. I mean I can't turn up in jeans and a T-shirt, smelling terrible!!!" said Jessa. Katie and Jessa were going to one of their other friends parties and they had to get ready, and look their best, especially Katie. For as Jessa knew, Katie had quite a soft spot for the party girls brother! However Katie wasn't as pretty as Jessa, who had thick eyeliner, lengthen golden brown hair, and dark brown eyes. They would spend ages getting ready. Katie and Jessa couldn't wait, it was going to be sooo much fun.

Figure 14. Amber's active woman narrative. Workshop 2, 6th May 2010.

vulnerable position the young girls were in as they performed gender (Kehily 2004). The situation was certainly never stable and the girls appeared to be balancing their own expectations of themselves with what they perceived others to think. Like Robin, India commented that she doesn't "really want to wear like loads of make up" but unlike Robin she conceded that she probably will wear more than she does currently because she has "seen the upper school girls" (India, Focus group 2, 28th June 2010) and what they look like. The implication put forward was that to fit in and be part of the collective 'norm,' India will have to start wearing more make up and on a more regular basis. This notion of changing to meet the expectations of the older girls in the school rippled throughout many conversations during my time with the girls.

Adolescence was a time in which the young girl was not only striving for an understanding of and carving her own subjectivity, but she was doing so in a commercially mediated cultural moment. Following McRobbie (1991), the standout points in the 'data'—those that were the most illuminating in terms of the lived experiences of the girls—occurred when the girls, individually and collectively 'worked through' and negotiated the expectations placed upon them by a cultural imperative and those they put in place in an effort to maintain their position and their successful performance of a gendered subjectivity. The emphasis on the investment and work on the 'self' attested to the accountability of the neoliberal citizen for their 'choices,' the result of which had telling implications for 'other' bodies. In the following chapter I am responsive to the demands to excavate and problematise this ethos of responsabilisation in terms of the negative ways "in which these young women assigned particular subjectivities to other girls/women who were not like them" (Rich 2005, p. 502).

5. NORMALISED BODIES: 'CHAVS' & 'CHINESE HAIR'

The primary aim of this chapter is to develop the imaginary of femininity as distinctly classed and raced. Following the lead of Harris (2004a, b), McRobbie (2008), Walkerdine (2003), Weekes (2004) and many others, I seek to understand young femininity and how it is experienced in relation to the broader historical and social contexts in which it is located. In more specific terms, I mobilise and explicate the notion that there exists a 'normalised' body politic one that is entirely contextual and predicated upon the various facets (social, cultural, political, economic, and technological) that shape subjectivities in the early twenty-first century. As such, and given the present conjuncture in which the young girl is positioned (addressed in chapter three), detailed consideration is now given to address the various interconnections between the lived experiences of the school girls and their performance of gender, social class and race. The experiences, conversations and images that I draw upon are derived from my aspirations to question the basis of the 'normalised' performance of gender that I have outlined in the previous chapter. In the workshops I felt compelled to inquire into and explore this conception of the 'normal,' and informed by the 'Media Texts' (Fusco, 2006) that I have compiled I probed into the classed and raced assumptions of female 'normalcy' (see appendix five).

Operating as what could be considered a disciplinary technology (Gill 2008), an analysis of the 'normalised' female body in classed and raced terms points to the embeddedness of these body politics within the sculpting of young school girl subjectivities as well as signalling the wider stagnation/reification of late capitalism and neoliberalism as it operates to silence the salient inequalities "associated with social and economic difference" (Walkerdine 2003, p. 239) and black and minority group representation. Although changed, these social axes of power have not disappeared, and far from the classless society decried by many it is actually axiomatic to claim that Britain has experienced increasing economic polarisation between the wealthiest and the poorest social classes in the last thirty years (Dorling et al. 2007; Hollingworth and Williams 2009; Skeggs 2005). What is more, the rationalisation of minority group status as a market driven cultural dynamic and the denouncement of racist sentiment has meant that the discussion of race has not diminished but rather changed, and scholars such as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006, p. 2) forward a racial ideology of "color [sic] blind racism." That these understandings—concerning the ceasing of class and the irrelevance of race—are not

shared by all does not make them a falsehood but “alludes to the success of entrenched beliefs in liberal pluralism” (Munt 2000, p. 10). Thus, as academics we need to (re)address exploitation and oppression in terms of social and cultural difference and centralise class and race as part of our historical present: as part of “any politics of the present” (Walkerdine 2003, p. 239). So, by no means redundant, class and race need to be considered and situated within the analysis; especially as it borders the notions of gender, sexuality and young femininity—subject hood—and effects bodily performance and experience (Munt 2000).

Centralising the young girl once more, I hope to forward the discussion of neoliberalism as a classed and raced ideology with an invigorated focus on how they matter in the performance of contemporary femininity. As previously discussed (chapter three) twenty-first century Britain is abound with (neoliberal) narratives of female success and feminist scholars Valerie Walkerdine (2003), Anita Harris (2004a, b), Emma Rich (2005), Angela McRobbie (2000, 2004a, b, 2008), Kim Allen and Jayne Osgood (2009), to name but a few, speak to the increasing cultural and political discourses which position young women as the ‘top girls,’ ‘can do girls,’ and the ‘future girls’ (Harris 2004a) of a neoliberal market ethic. This figure authenticates the characteristics of resilience, individualisation (Carabine 2007), determination, desire, autonomous self-hood and confidence required to demarcate the ‘traditional’ homo-economicus (Foucault 2008; Hamann 2009): this female has become indicative of an active neoliberal model of how the body should look, be, act and move “through the power of a generalized concept of normality” (O’Riordan 2007, p. 240). These operating discourses connote the camouflaged, yet exhibited, decontextualised individual schematic of neoliberalism and the resultant conservative celebration of normalcy that is afforded to some girls at the inevitable expense of others. This individualisation thesis (Beck 1992, 2002; Giddens 1991) has been readily problematised on the basis that it masks the social inequalities that permeate to discipline and regulate this emergent populist femininity (see Allen and Osgood 2009; McRobbie 2008; Ringrose 2007; Tyler and Bennett 2010; Walkerdine et al. 2001). Hence, Allen and Osgood (2009) draw our attention to how neoliberal ideologies of market meritocracy (Tyler and Bennett 2010) deploy a rhetoric of normative femininity that is highly exclusionary, (importantly for this chapter) “premised on middle class ideals and experiences” (Allen and Osgood 2009, p. 2) and has consequences for those ‘other(ed)’ bodies.

In the face of a changing political landscape (from that of New Labour to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition) as this sits alongside the emergence and diffusion of everyday techniques and technologies of governance/knowledge (MacLeod, Raco and Ward 2003; Rose 1996a, 1999, 2000b) and the new role of the British citizen as entrepreneur of the ‘self,’ our comprehension of young femininity—in terms of the ‘norms’ and behaviours that govern these understandings—has crystallised (Allen and Osgood 2009). With “the growing ideological purchase of meritocracy and choice” (Tyler and Bennett 2010, p. 376) this crystallisation—if we follow political and popular idiom—alludes to the de-classed, de-raced female subject. However, in contradistinction to these claims I reason that underlying discourses of class and race remain central features in the young girls’ (re)constitution and (re)establishment of ‘normative’ femininity particularly as they pertain to features of femininity that are ‘nice’ and ‘natural.’

5.1 CLASSED FEMININITY

Informed by Valerie Walkerdine (2003) I take as my starting point an understanding of the historicity of class as an always and already constituted moral category. The utilisation of class as a mode of ‘classifying’ by the founder of the Salvation Army in the nineteenth century suggests both the morality imbued in the ‘classifying,’ naming or labelling of the *populus* and points towards the truth effects (Walkerdine 1990) or “truth games” (Foucault 1988, p. 18) through which class can be put to work in the management of (urban) populations (Walkerdine 2003).

5.1.1 *Cultural Studies & Class*

Aligned with an ethical imperative to “recentre the experiences of those traditionally excluded from the analytical gaze” (Munt 2000, p. 4), the collective work of cultural studies scholars such as Richard Hoggart (1957), Raymond Williams (1962, 1965) and E. P. Thompson (1963) holds class cultures as the foci. Given this heritage (Nelson et al. 1992), and as noted by Sally Munt (2000, p. 4), “British working-class culture became the text, as well as the theory” for an emergent cultural studies as discipline. The essence is that whether or not class is talked, written, spoken about in explicit terms, it is always deeply entrenched within the British landscape. Crucially then, its apparent invisibility since the late 1980s (Tyler 2008) and the subsequent call to (re)attend to class distinctions

(Hollingworth and Williams 2009; Skeggs 2005; Tyler 2008), should be understood in terms of the circulating political rhetoric of classlessness that has enabled an “abdication from acknowledging class relations” (Skeggs 2005, p. 54). Invoking earlier discussions (such as those in chapter three) concerning neoliberalism as a political ideology, the evasion of social class from popular and political discourse can be understood as formulated upon the Thatcherite/Blair to Brownite/Cameron-Clegg(ite) projects of bourgeoisification (Munt 2000) and the palpable discourse of individualism (Rich 2005).

Perhaps reflective of our current political climate and/or the potential ‘unsexiness’ of class based research, some scholars have commented on the diminishing importance of class— “[a]t best, it has become one “variable” among many . . . at worst it has dissolved away altogether” (Barker and Beezer 1992, p. 16)—offering up post-structuralist arguments as facilitating this retreat (Medhurst 2000). Whilst remaining aware of these critiques and criticisms of contemporary research, I extend an alternative understanding, one that does not contend that class affords some notion of prior determinism, it is never a given, privileged and unidirectional axis of power (Andrews 2002; Hall 1990) (see chapter two). However, I do recognise the apparent need for a ‘return to class’—placing it back on the research agenda and our analytic radar (Hollingworth and Williams 2009; McCulloch et al. 2006; Shildrick and MacDonald 2006; Walkerdine 2003). This involves ‘theorising out’ situated, contextual knowledges that are, in Nayak’s (2003) parlance, closely intertwined with other power lines that constitute one’s subjectivity and the identity politics of the moment. In doing so it is hoped this analysis will reflect the cultural studies trajectory post-1970 (Nelson et al. 1992) and introduce *ostranenie* in an attempt to disturb (Munt 2000) and problematise the taken for granted of wider political and social discourse (Skeggs 2005).

5.1.2 *Class as the (In)visible Trope of Neoliberalism*

Neoliberal ideology was the dominant classes’ response to the considerable gains achieved by the working and peasant classes between the end of World War II and the mid-1970s. The huge increase in inequalities that has occurred since then is the direct result of the growth in income and well-being of the dominant classes, which is a consequence of class-determined public policies such as: (a) *deregulation of labor [sic] markets*, an anti-working class move; (b) *deregulation of financial markets*, which has greatly benefited financial capital, the hegemonic branch of capital in the period 1980–2005; (c) *deregulation of commerce in goods and services*,

which has benefited the high-consumption population at the expense of laborers [sic]; (d) *reduction of social public expenditures*, which has hurt the working class; (e) *privatization of services*, which has benefited the top 20 percent of the population (by income) at the expense of the well-being of the working classes that use public services; (f) *promotion of individualism and consumerism*, hurting the culture of solidarity; (g) *development of a theoretical narrative and discourse that pays rhetorical homage to the markets*, but masks a clear alliance between transnationals and the state in which they are based; and (h) *promotion of an anti-interventionist discourse*, that is in clear conflict with the actual increased state interventionism, to promote the interests of the dominant classes and the economic units—the transnationals—that foster their interests (Navarro 2007, pp. 53-54, emphasis in original).

I open this section with the citation from Navarro (2007) in order to better place and position the interconnections of class and class alliances within the political rationalities presented so far in this thesis. Evidently, these public policies, and those that resemble them globally, are shaped by a notion of class determinism wherein there is a conflict of interest between the social classes. In particular, my emphasis in this chapter, is on deepening an understanding of how class constitutes and is constituted as a pivotal tenet of neoliberalism; implicated—as it appears to be—within the changing nature of governance. Thus, located within and amongst circulatory, dispersed, techniques and technologies of governance and predicated upon the evolving, uncertain, complex backdrop of late capitalism, the role of the state and everyday citizenship has been augmented. The emphasis now is on centralising the imperativeness of the economy: a reduction of “all human action into the domain of the market” (Keddie 2010, p. 139). Building on Isin (1998), neoliberal consumers’/clients’/users’ participation and success in this game of the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Rose 1989, 2000a, b) is not guaranteed, “[while] there are those who are increasingly at liberty to create options in terms of where they live, work, play and seek . . . educational services for themselves and their children, there are those for whom such choices are becoming ever more limited” (Isin 1998, p. 185). With this in mind the central tenets of neoliberal governance as they are rolled out across Britain can be understood as functioning to further strengthen the class character of our social fabric (Navarro 2007). Accordingly, the oft cited aims of neoliberal public policy to achieve economic efficiency and social well-being have been remarkably unsuccessful (Navarro 2007) and significantly, the illusion of opportunity presented by such a political rationality has received much scholarly critique (Giroux 2000, 2001c, 2003a, b, 2004a, b, 2005; McMurria 2008; Peck and Tickell 2002; Rose 1999, see also chapter three).

Situating their analysis within these depoliticising processes that work to locate social justice and welfare matters to the periphery (Keddie 2010), Hollingworth and Williams (2009) contend that discourses of individualisation (Giddens 1991) and responsabilisation proliferate the politics of our historical present, initiating an understanding of the ‘self’ as a product of ‘correct’ life ‘choices:’ one is incentivised to become the instigator of their own choice biography (Brannen and Nilsen 2005) and to model the ‘self’ as “enterprising, reflexive, autonomous and self-regulating” (Hollingworth and Williams 2009, p. 468). Perhaps nowhere is this new model citizen (Carabine 2007) more apparent than when one looks towards what it means to be, and what is expected of a young women in neoliberal Western late capitalist societies.

5.1.3 Locating Girls: Class & the Feminine Subject

Following Walkerdine (2003, p. 239), my interest in introducing class to the sphere of interconnected theoretical and female dialogues was to delve into the discourses, narratives and discursive practices through which it was being understood and the place it occupied in “producing the modes of subjectification and subjectivity” by which middle-upper class girls worked on themselves. I take the view that class does not entail an awareness of purely economic conditions in and of themselves (Archer and Francis 2006), it cannot be conceived in terms of its objective empirical existence alone (Munt 2000; Vincent, Ball and Braun 2010a, b). Rather social class is formulated upon a much broader, more fluid (Skeggs 2004) notion that is grounded in people’s identities, cultural and bodily practices and its “enduring subjective existence as lived experience” (Munt 2000, p. 3). Lottie’s comment below infers that class can be ‘read’ and hence its representation and interpretation can have very real effects in marking the subject and how they understand themselves and perceive that they are understood by others (Hollingworth and Williams 2009):

People think I am posh and rich sometimes which I do not like. I’m not, I’m just well spoken and have a big house

Lottie, Personal biography, 29th April 2010.

As the political, the cultural, the economic and the social collide with the everyday realities of growing up as a girl, Lawler's (1999) analysis takes on ever new and significant meanings:

One way in which class inequality works is through making working-class subjectivities pathological, so that class relations are not just economic relations but also relations of superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, judgement/shame (Lawler 1999, p. 5).

Mobilising class-based discourses the girls in this study simultaneously demarcated those working-class "poor people" (Joanna, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and carved out a space in which to understand, preserve and legitimate their middle-upper class subjectivity. The illustrations produced by Eva as part of a workshop task (see appendix five) and the accompanying annotations depict this explicitly:

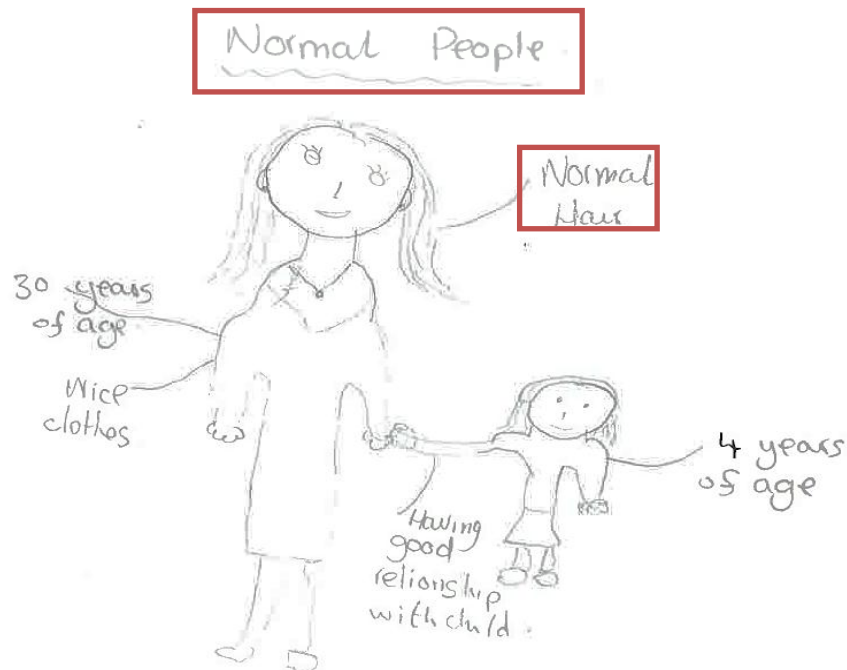


Figure 15. Eva's classed femininity illustration. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

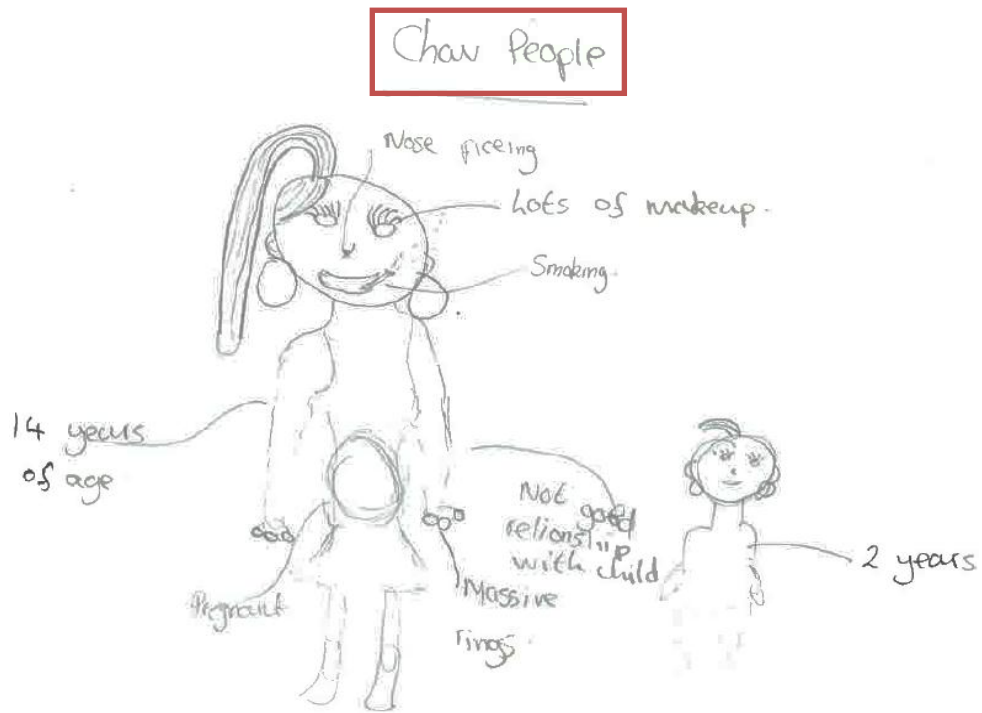


Figure 16. Eva's classed femininity illustration. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Through establishing clear understandings of ‘us and them,’ Eva negotiated with the ‘other’ in an effort to constitute the middle-upper class ‘self’ as respectable (Hollingworth and Williams 2009; Skeggs 2004) and ‘normal.’ Furthermore, the importance and value attributed to this process of differentiation was starkly realised in the conversation between Paris, Lottie and Roxy. Of note were their revelations of the self-surveillance, monitoring and negotiations that were involved in the performance and construal of particular subject positions. For the duration of the session focused on the classed female the girls were quick to question and challenge what exactly each other meant, correct themselves and consequently reaffirm their understanding of the differences; their understanding of themselves:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Me | What is different between this girl and you? |
| Paris | I think we’re a bit classier if that makes sense they look a bit classy |
| Lottie | Are you sure they look classier? |
| Roxy | Do you know what classy is? |

Paris I know what classy means not classier but like normal, I don't want to say normal because that's I know

Roxy They're normaler [sic]?

Paris No

Roxy Or we are?

Paris No we're norma . . . [trails off]

Roxy Oh ok cause [sic] I was gonna say

Paris No I like don't know they

Lottie We respect ourselves they don't

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Directed by the girls' talk, I am careful not to refer to a separation between the political, the economic and the social and cultural realms in terms of class, instead I am suggesting that they are deeply implicated and embroiled; their complex interplay is visible and audible and configures around mechanisms of inclusion, exclusion, pathology and 'normalisation' (Lawler 1999). The girls' initial confusion over terminology and vocabulary when recognising class (Bottero 2004) seemingly reiterates a previous point concerning the invisibility of social inequalities in a climate of responsibility whereby the onus fall on individuality. Still they soon positioned themselves as knowledgeable and well informed about what it meant to be lower class:

Me So what's the lower class?

Joanna Like poor people

Louisa Homeless

Roxy No, like lower class umm, like they are not as polite and like I don't know maybe like. It's not really like they are poor

Lottie	You can't really generalise that is kinda [sic] harsh sometimes
Roxy	I don't want to like say anything is poor but if they live in a really rough estate and, like umm and like. The lower class maybe it is them being, they can't afford much stuff and they like live in umm really
Lucy	Council estates
Lottie	They wear tracksuit bottoms all the time
Charlotte	You can wear trackie-b's like and look fine but like if you wear like a whole outfit
Nina	The same colour
Joanna	Matching
Lottie	Hoodie which is up
Roxy	No like you meet people wearing that and they're chavs so you immediately think anyone else wearing that is a chav

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The girls in this workshop constructed the lower class in both economic, structural terms as “homeless” and living on “council estates” through to the corporeality of a classed subjectivity and how this became, or was becoming, embodied (by some/ ‘others’). As their discussion continued it became apparent that for these girls class differences were far more to do with, far more comprehensible, in terms of patterns of consumption and the discourses related to the body politic. Informed by Tyler (2008), these class orientated assumptions were made through the realisation of one body, a body that operated as both a signal of the ‘other,’ the pathological (Lawler 1999) and their ‘inappropriate’ life ‘choices’ and also as a distancing device, working to highlight the girls’ more ‘appropriate’ femininity. This body; this figurative (Tyler 2008, Tyler and Bennett 2010) working class body, was conceptualised by the girls from the beginning as the ‘chav.’ In terms of

reflecting the climate of this particular workshop and the vernacular that was readily deployed, this is the discourse utilised hence forth to discuss the classed female:

Me On the first piece of paper I want you to draw this working or lower class person, girl [interrupted]

Group Chav

Me Ok I want you to write around it and label the things that make her working class or lower class [interrupted]

Group Or a chav

Me Say what this girl might be thinking about [interrupted]

Group Or chavs

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

At moments like this it was possible to see very clearly how the girls had replaced or were now equating ‘chav’ as being the terminology to talk about the lower classes. The female ‘chav’ figure came to represent an entire section of the population that were supposedly homogenous in their appearance and conduct.

5.1.4 Class(ifying) & ‘Chavs’

Before advancing the discussion further, I feel that it is important to highlight the negotiations, variance and intricacies, both at a theoretical and empirical level, that the (re)constitution of the working class subjectivity stimulates, lest I reify a narrative that has been, at times, and often in ambiguous ways, challenged and contested.

The prominent (re)construction of the working class as a group of young females who were/are analogous was maintained for the most part through a generalised and universalised retreat to the ‘chav’ discourse. This is a move that failed to account for, or show an appreciation of, certain structural currents, the results of a changing cultural (occupational) landscape in light of the post-fordist, -statist and -industrial forces and the

nexus of cultural forces responsible for example, for the decline of the more ‘traditional’ working class occupations aligned to localised manufacturing, the growth of e-commerce and the expansion of conspicuous consumption (Giroux 2003a). It also fails to acknowledge the complexity and messiness that encroached into this otherwise consistent girl narrative. With Vincent et al. (2010a, b), there were episodes where inter-class homogeneity was problematised and instead the heterogeneity of class boundaries operationalised. In these instances, and with specific reference to working class *femininities*, the divisions between and within classes were imagined upon intimations of ‘rough’ as in contrast to ‘respectable.’

Lawler (2005a, b) argues that the respectable, law abiding, forward looking and hard working (Vincent et al. 2010a, b) have been absorbed into the middle classes, consigning the ‘rough,’ the contagion, to the ‘outside.’ This disaffected element of the working class populous: the work-shy, are exposed by their passivity and their apparent acceptance of welfare provision. The visibility of the ‘other(ed)’ body then, is suggestive of a partial picture of class segregation and subordination. The residual bodies do however, tell stories and the discourses that are articulated in, on and around classed corporeality, act as signs, symbols and discursive practices that are ubiquitous in nature, and are “engaged in, by and simultaneously encircle men, women and children on a daily basis” (Weis 2004, p. 4). Therefore, it was the overarching concepts of a particularised underclass (Skeggs 2004; Vincent et al. 2010a, b)—recognisable by their ‘social exclusion’—that were called upon, and worked through by the girls in ways that were at times contradictory and challenging to discern.

Reciprocally, and in ways that were indicative of a more multifaceted conception of the working class, the girls did, on occasion, deviate from the dominant derogatory working class narrative—read ‘chav’ narrative—that shaped the workshop and focus group discussions. At times this was to note that not all ‘chavs’ are nasty, you can get “funny chavs” (Monique, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010), “upper class chavs” (Amber, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010), ‘chavs’ you can be friends with, and at other points the ‘chav’ was seen almost as a subjectivity sculpted through consumption (Hollingworth and Williams 2009), these were girls that were trying hard to be ‘chavs;’ it is an image they ‘choose’ to embody (something the girls found amusing). Consistent with Hollingworth and Williams’ (2009) findings, during the workshop the girls did recognise and address the competing versions

of the working class ‘chav’ that they experienced and that shaped their experiences. Subsequently, and interspersed with apologetic language regarding generalisations: “yeah I know it’s a stereotype but it’s kinda [sic] true” (Aqua, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010), Lucy, Paris, Charlotte and Lottie discussed (within)class differences as not an objective entity based on occupations but as an issue of identifications (Medhurst 2000):

- Lucy Like some like some chavs are like really really nice
- Roxy Yeah they can be
- Charlotte Yeah they’re really nice I’m friends with quite a few of them
[other girls laugh] yeah but with pony club and everything
- Lottie Charlotte Charlotte does this tell you something about your
character?
- Charlotte And then umm but then like there are some people that are like
really chavvy like you can hardly understand them and they’re
like, it’s just a bit fake. I have chav friends but they are aren’t like
really chavvy they are just in the middle
- Me So there is a continuum kind of thing?
- Charlotte Chav chav, normal kind of chavvy because that’s what you are
like when you are brought up you know what I mean? And then
there’s like *us*
- Me So chav chav, chav, and *us*?
- Charlotte Yeah

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis.

Interacting with and accordingly scrutinising the ‘chav’ permitted the girls to align ‘choice’ with the embodiment of this subjectivity. For example, those individuals that are “really chavvy like hardly understand them” were considered to be masquerading and appropriating a ‘chav’ identity position, one that was “fake” and this allowed blame to be

attributed at an individual level. Furthermore, associating with the 'abject' was also deemed as something impacting upon self-identity (Giddens 1991) in such a way that it revealed "something about *your* character" (my emphasis). Within the context of our rapidly changing local and global social existence, this affiliation with the body of the 'other' takes on (bio/bodily) political consequences:

The individual must integrate information deriving from a diversity of mediated experiences with local involvements in such a way as to connect future projects with past experiences in a reasonably coherent fashion. Only if the person is able to develop an inner authenticity . . . can this be attained. A reflexively ordered narrative of self-identity provides the means of giving coherence to the finite lifespan, given changing external circumstances. Life politics from this perspective concerns debates and contestations deriving from the reflexive project of the self (Giddens 1991, p. 215).

Ultimately then, the (re)conceptualised working class was not only a heterogeneous entity but there was also recognition that not all 'chavs' are bad. Nevertheless, the creation and maintenance of an acceptable, authentic project of the 'self' imposed that this group of white middle-upper class girls oft retreated to a homogenising process when talking the working class female into being. This had the effect of impacting upon their own life politic and maintaining 'normative' class boundaries/borders day to day. Quintessentially, the 'chav;' in its various iterations was the 'other' to which the 'normative,' 'us' was established.

In light of interpretations such as this, scholars in media and cultural studies (Holmes 2005; Holmes and Jermyn 2005; Palmer 2005; Skeggs and Wood 2004; Skeggs, Wood and Thurmin 2008) are engaged in analysis that seeks to interrogate the multiple formations of representational struggles and to articulate how social classifications are played out, mediated and interpreted (Tyler and Bennett 2010). In this context then, Britain has witnessed the emergence of the 'chav,' a figure conceived of predominantly on the basis of their aesthetic value, but also the social cues they embody: accent, age, '(in)appropriate' behaviour, eating habits. Tyler (2008, p.20) notes that not only is the 'chav' phenomenon a vehicle for explicitly exhibiting an ontology of class antagonism and difference, but it is "suggestive of a deeper shift in class relations." The popularised iconography of the 'chav' is ubiquitous, we can read about 'chavs' in magazines, newspapers, we watch them (being mocked) in comedy sketches; we hear references to 'chavs' as part of 'mainstream'

vocabulary. Encapsulated within the accumulation of image and metaphor, the representations drawn by the girls of classed femininity were denotative of how the white working classes have been 'othered' and essentialised via a massified 'chav' discourse (Hollingworth and Williams 2009):

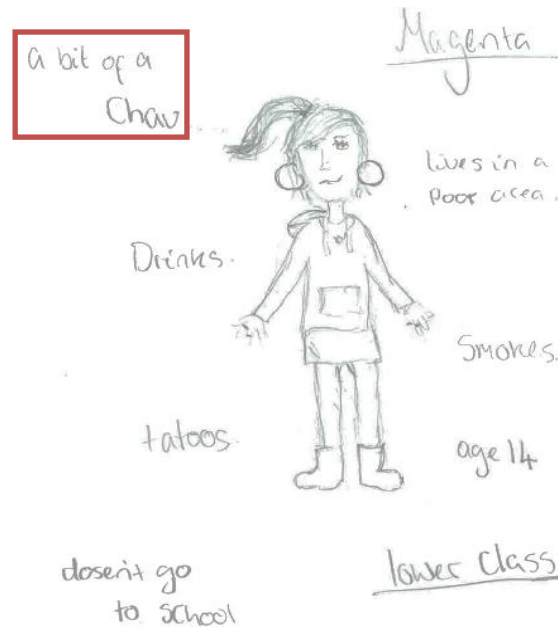


Figure 17. Ameila's classed femininity illustration. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

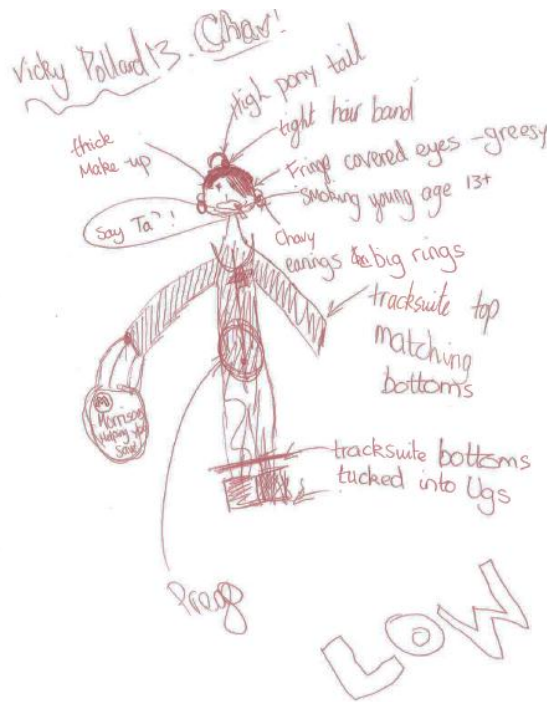


Figure 18. India's classed femininity illustration. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The 'chav' semantic, in the sense that it was employed during the workshop and focus groups, was imbued with notions of hierarchical judgement, spatial organisation, and examination that were conducive to the production of docile bodies (Foucault 1979). The effect of these 'normalising' mechanisms and dividing practices was the establishment of the differences between that which was 'normal' from that which threatened (Cole et al. 2004). Of import was the negative a/effect affiliated with the 'chav' and how this manifested itself in a marked physical manner. The cumulative a/effect of the social stigma associated with the 'chav'—the blurring of emotional and corporeal qualities (Ngai 2005)—does, according to Tyler (2008), actively block social mobility or limit social opportunity in ways that were not incomprehensible to the girls, and emerged as they were asked to imagine alternative possibilities:

Could you say they could be thinking about things like, I know this sounds really weird, but like their debt? Because like quite a lot of working class people are living in council estates and they're in loads of debt and stuff

Roxy, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

By mapping the terrain “upon which contemporary configurations of” (Allen and Osgood 2009, p. 8) class were being situated, I now want to examine “how these are lived out and negotiated by young women when constructing their subjectivities” (Allen and Osgood 2009, p. 8). Garnering theoretical guidance from an exploration of the cultural conditions that prevail to mask class consciousness and bolstering this with an awareness that some cultural identities are not available, in the same way, to all (Archer et al. 2007; Shildrich and MacDonald 2006; Skeggs 2004) I owe a debt to the work of Hollingworth and Williams (2009) and Anita Harris (2003, 2004a). Recognising that in an environment charged with the surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and the (re)production of the girl, those who fail to conform bear the hallmarks not of “systematic inequality but insufficient or ‘inappropriate’ behaviour on the self” (Smith, Maguire and Stanway 2008, p. 74), I too am guided by the points of departure offered by Harris (2003). Subsequently, in explicating the previously addressed cultural fascination with the governance of girlhood (see chapter three) and the binary between ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ conduct and body management (see chapter four) the discussion turns to the interrelated classed governance of the *aesthetic or bodily, behaviour* and *moral productivity* of individuals.

5.1.4.1 Class(ifying) & ‘Chavs’: Traversing the Aesthetic/Bodily

[T]he discourse of the underclass turned crucially upon a (perceived or real) pathology in the working classes’ relations to *production* and socially productive labour. Its emergent successor, the concept of the ‘chav’, is in contrast oriented to purportedly pathological class dispositions in relation to the sphere of *consumption* (Hayward and Yar 2006, p. 10, emphasis in original).

Discussions of class—specifically class difference—focused predominantly upon the appearance of the working class, the ‘chav.’ Positioned as the new citizens of our neoliberal moment young girls are (re)established as smart consumers (Harris 2004a) of both product and lifestyle. For the girls at Franklin School consumption was aligned to a display of ‘normal’ middle-upper class femininity. The mobilisation of an aesthetic discourse was bound to narratives of the young girls as active, consuming citizens, blending aspects of consumption with diverse social and political interests (representative of an individual’s class, race, sexuality) such that the sculpting and management of a young girls subjectivity becomes a discursive practice wrought with struggles over power, (in)visibility and surveillance (Griffin 2001). Turning to extracts from the girls’ personal

biographies and maps, and building on the previous references that have been made, it was apparent that for the girls having the power to consume manifested itself through their love and enjoyment of shopping (Haytko and Baker 2004):

I love to shop and go to sleep overs [sic]

Jasmine's personal biography. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

When I'm at home I like to go on the computer and shopping

Eva's personal biography. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

My name is Paris, I live in Franklin. I have one older sister and one younger brother. I am 13 years old . . . I like to go shopping and I don't like being cooped up in the house all day I like to go out

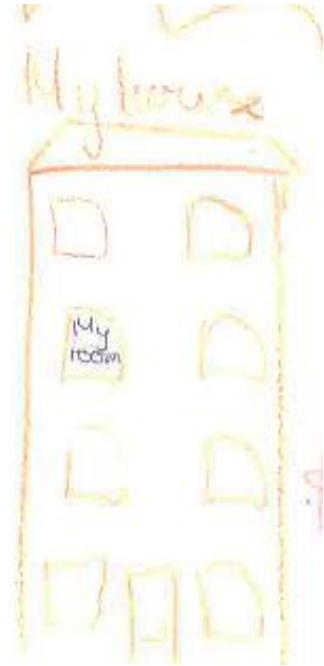
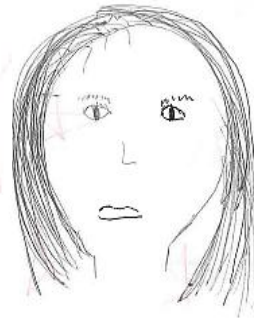
Paris' personal biography. Workshop 2, 29th April 2010.

Cornwall

I have a holiday house in Cornwall. I like going on the Camel trail which is a cycle track. I also like shopping in Redruth there and going to the beach. I see friends there too.

Shopping

I love shopping with friends and getting new things!



Sports

I am not a very sporty person but I enjoy horse riding, swimming, cricket, tennis etc...

Figure 19. Nina's personal map. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

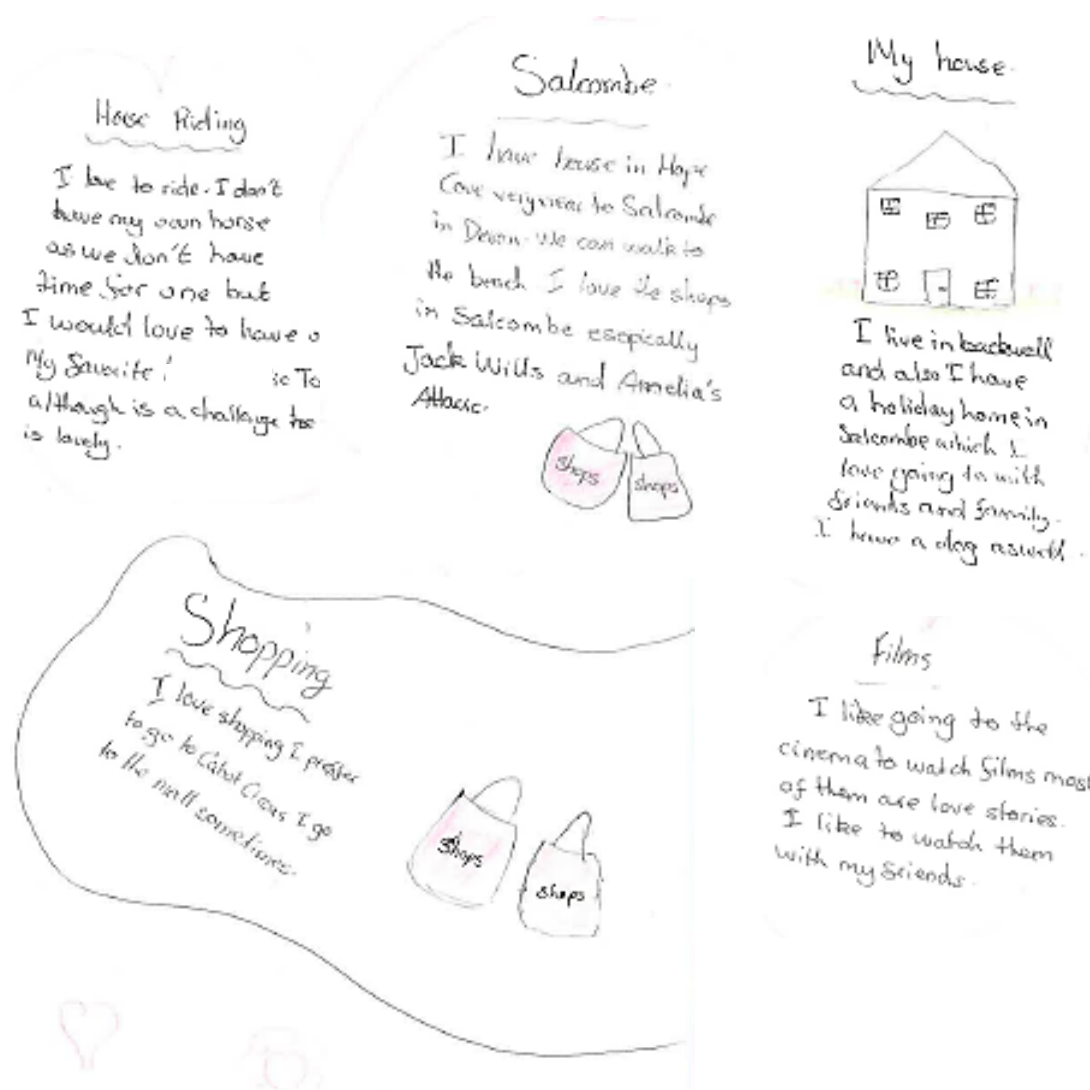


Figure 20. Eva's personal map. Workshop 1, 29th April 2010.

Furthermore, as the conversation below highlights, consumption involved more than simply the literal act of shopping, it required that that the girls took on the role as a knowledgeable and informed consumer:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| India | There's a lot of sales on in Marks and Spencer |
| Paris | Yeah there are |
| Eva | The sales are on everywhere |

India And mum keeps on buying clothes and she keeps saying like
 ‘wear these clothes wear these clothes’ but you don’t have time
 to wear the others and then she complains about the others

Focus Group, 28th June 2010.

Shopping and consuming became, therefore, a political act, making statements about the subject position of the young girl and her delegitimised ‘other.’ Shopping and the consumption of ‘goods,’ products and/or cultural resources (Evans 2010) overlaps with the demands, constraints and potential of the performance of femininity. For Hall (1989, p. 131):

Everybody, including people in very poor societies whom we in the West frequently speak about as though they inhabit a world outside culture, knows that today’s “goods” double up as social signs and produce meanings as well as energy.

The invitation to consume (McRobbie 1997c) is not only *not* available to all women, but consumption—as discursive practice—takes on new value when ‘correct choices’ have to be made with regard to the presentation of the ‘self.’ The bodily display of an ‘ideal type,’ a ‘can-do’ femininity was once more countered by those who were ‘at risk’ of engaging in disordered consumption (Harris 2004a).

The intense regulation of the individual through neoliberal rhetoric makes docile and productive the ‘proper’ consumer-citizen and renders those ‘improper’ consumers as pathological (Allen and Osgood 2009). Class can be read into fashion styles and, consistent with popular conceptions and representations (Hayward and Yar 2006), the girls readily identified ‘chavs’ according to the clothes they wear. Centralised around the thematics of the overt matching of styles and excessivity, the girls deployed certain specificities around tracksuits, jewellery, hairstyles and make up as being symbolic of working class femininity. The oppositional representations of contemporary femininity derived from the annotated illustrations that the girls produced and that are offered below are indicative of the articulation of social classifications; the wearing of a tracksuit took on political significance when it was construed as inauthentic in comparison to the taken-for-granted ‘norms’ of middle class style (Tyler 2008):

Tracksuite [sic] top matching bottome [sic]

India, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

cheap puff jacket . . . cheap tracky

Stephie, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

baggy tops . . . short scurts [sic] . . . cheap clothing

Amber, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

full suit track-suit

Alexia, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

baggy tracksuit bottoms . . . trainers

Louisa, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The ‘authenticity’ of this figure was called into question on the basis of the ‘choice’ and the resultant adornment of a “matching trakie [sic]” (Charlotte, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and “trainers” (Joanna, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010). In light of this, consumer goods such as clothes “require[d] an active negotiation of the symbolic (if not material) uses of the item, offering the subjective experience (if not objective reality) of sovereignty” (Willis 1990, cited by Smith Maguire and Stanaway 2008, p. 71). As emphasised by my research diary entry below, the classroom was filled with lively and vivacious ‘chatter’ as ideas were pitched and representations negotiated and contemplated with reference to what the working class meant to the girls and what they understood by it:

The conversation and offering of ideas at this point was frantic and all the girls were animated and engaged in conversation amongst themselves and as a group

Research diary entry 25th May 2010.

What was striking was the apparent ease with which the girls were able to put forward their ideas concerning lower class femininity but also the humour, giggling and distaste that accompanied their valuations around the perceptible absurdity of the ‘choices’ being made by the ‘other’ girl: “and all their eyelashes are separate it’s like *urghhh*” (Lottie, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010). Informed by Tyler (2008), I understand these reactions as being predominantly formulated upon class-based disgust and far from being simply amusing and commonplace these reactions construct the working class female into being—they gave the ‘chav’ life. Through negotiating with this figure the girls themselves grappled with their lived experiences of class. Further, added to the incumbent humour was the language of excess that circulated and proliferated during the discussions (Hollingworth and Williams 2009). The girls asserted that this young girl would be “trying to look sexy” (Amber, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and be wearing “*lots* of make up” (Stephie, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis), “chavvy earrings *big* rings” (India, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis), “*massive* rings” (Eva, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis), “[*big* hoops” (Robin, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis) and generally “*over done* jewelry [sic]” (Charlotte, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis).

Class was embodied and read through the multiple stylisations of the ‘self’ that the girls proffered. Moreover, the excessive corporeality (Tyler and Bennett 2010) and the undertones of abhorrence that this brought about, shrouded the Franklin School girls’ formulations and was extended to hair and the way it is coiffed such that *the* ‘chav’ hairstyle was consistently described as “tied back greasy” (Nina, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and even in some instances the size of the fringe was scrutinised for its apparent deviation from the ‘norm.’ For example, Alexia noted that the working class girl has a “*big* fringe” (Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis). The girls’ employment of the technology of femininity concerned with aesthetic stylisation emphasised certain features of the female body as being big, massive and over the top and again alluded to the careful—consumption fuelled—negotiations that the girls were making. Our historical present creates contradiction and ambiguity for young females, they can—if resources and structural parameters permit—at once be supported and maintained by a neoliberal market heralding the arrival of the new female figure but they are also dangerously and precariously positioned within it (Harris 2003).

The articulation of the exorbitant was not reserved solely for the accessorising of the body, what clothing masks, or fails to conceal as the case may be, was also thought to be imbued with class inflected reasoning:

Charlotte They wear like crop tops even if they are like really fat and they
 have fat squashing out

Paris And it's a bit sick

Charlotte Like fine wear it if you're skinny but it's not a good look

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The 'soft body' (Jeffords, 1994), the superfluous flesh of the lower class female, or rather the confessions that are possible through evidence of this excessive flesh can be understood, once more, as a demonstration of the dominant and powerful discourses that surround the body and social class (Rail and LaFrance 2009, p. 75). The feeling of 'sickness' that was induced as a result of seeing the "fat squashing out" draws on the affective dimension (Skeggs 2005) that makes biopedagogies and the biopolitical governance of the population so effective (Foucault 2008). The body that Charlotte and Paris (re)constructed was that of femininity gone bad, it was femininity at its excessive and most 'inappropriate' and it thus conjured notions of the "unproductive body that has been and continues to be overly reliant on the welfare state" (Rail and LaFrance 2009, p. 75).

Ideologies of responsabilisation relocate the role of the individual and the role of the embodied 'self' in such a manner that the way one dresses, styles their hair and applies their make up is regarded as a means of distinguishing between females, establishing a 'normative' femininity that is consumer oriented and necessarily middle class. The girls engaged a language of the extreme that in conjunction with a preoccupation with the fake and unnatural discursively implied inferior taste, taste that was not only different to the middle-upper class 'norm' but was a vulgar impersonation of it. Following Hollingworth and Williams (2009), judgements of taste were clearly enacted and depicted, for instance, by the wearing of "fake Uggs" (Paris, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and fake designer

goods as well as the fact that “they have like that much make up on their face” (Charlotte, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010):

- Paris Yeah chavidas
- Amelia Chavidas I love that
- Me Chavidas? Paris where’s that from, where does that come from?
- Louisa From Adidas
- Me Oh
- Roxy Everyone thought that adidas was really chavvy but it has come like
- Paris Yeah it has become really popular now it used to be [trails off]
- Roxy It’s like the opposite of Burberry, everyone thought Burberry was really posh and like expensive but [interrupted]
- Lottie But Burberry is posh and expensive
- Roxy But chavs wear it now
- Paris It’s probably fake though
- Lottie As long as you have the real thing it is fine

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The discourses of the fake and excessive were engaged as an affront, they were distinctive from the ‘normalised’ middle-upper class femininity that the girls themselves recognised and lived. In this instance the ‘appropriate’ and ‘normalised’ appearance of the middle-upper class girl was encapsulated by their more “natural” (Nina, Workshop 4, 20th May 2010) aesthetic:

Me	What made her pretty?
Kate	She was naturally pretty
Me	She was naturally pretty?
Kate	Yeah and she hadn't even used like fake tan or dyed her hair

Workshop 4, 20th May 2010.

This was a naturalness then that contravened the use of “fake tan” or hair dye, Roxy and Kate, for example, highlighted the desirability of “natural skin and hair colour” (Workshop 4, 20th May 2010). The hyper feminine, and some might say hyper (hetero)sexual (Skeggs 2005), was considered undesirable by the girls, this was a figure that was “pretty but they emphasise it too much” (Charlotte, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and she traversed beyond the boundaries of the ideal. The working class female, as she was contained within one homogenised body, signalled social class appropriation through moral euphemism (Bromley 2000). Hence, the deployment of comparisons around the fake and authentic; the natural and unnatural can be read or interpreted as being associated with class sensitive differentials (Skeggs 2005). In this sense India’s (Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) observation that the working class girl would be wearing “thick make up” whilst the image of the middle-upper class female (herself) would utilise “natural make up,” established a binary between that which was natural, respectful, stylish and overindulgence, that which was *too* much. Smith Maguire and Stanway (2008, p. 72) assert that comments such as this “signal aspirations to a more self-assured, socially-competent, adult mode of embodiment” that is the antithesis of the inferior taste and style of the lower class girl (Hollingworth and Williams 2009; Tyler and Bennett 2010). At this juncture the girls’ stories, be they verbal, drawn and/or written, were indicative of the process of ‘otherisation.’ In this sense, through establishing a clear understanding of ‘us and them,’ the middle-upper class girl (re)constituted the ‘self’ as legitimate, authentic and respectable (Skeggs 2004; Smith Maguire and Stanway 2008), and nowhere was this more evident than when analysing the annotations that accompanied the drawn images of classed femininity:



Figure 21. Felicity's classed femininity illustrations. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Calling upon the competing language of excess, fake and cheap versus 'normal,' nice and expensive in collusion with commodified aesthetics, the girls lay emphasis on the manifestation of certain visual and narrative markers, discourses and discursive practices that functioned in multifaceted ways to explicitly highlight the flaws of the working class body (Hollingworth and Williams 2009):

Roxy But they get umm, because they are so skinny, because they probably don't eat they get really big cheek bones and like when their hair is all tied up like that they

Paris They stretch [shows me how their faces are stretched back by their hair- Essex facelift]. Their face is stretched and they pull their hair so tight their face stretches

Nina It's nice to have your hair back and more natural, but then having it back and then loads of make up doesn't look very nice

Paris

Nina it's when they scrape it back, it must hurt as well

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis.

At the same time that the girls identified and articulated a working class femininity they also (re)established and (re)constituted the middle-upper class life, as they experienced it, through silence and omission. As Walkerdine (2003, p. 246) notes, “everything that is not present in this performance contains that other narrative, the narrative of being ‘Other’, now pushed into the place opposite to the position she . . . holds.” So through the figurative ‘other,’ the ‘chav,’ the middle-upper class girl of the neoliberal present was brought into being.

5.1.4.2 Class(ifying) & ‘Chavs’: Traversing Behaviour

Undoubtedly dress was the initial point of reference used by these white, middle-upper class girls, however interlaced with these aesthetic class narratives were comments about the conduct and behaviour of the working classes. In this sense, and drawing directly from the girls’ dialogue, difference was understood in terms of violence,—or rather the perceived threat of violence—being tough, engaging in age ‘inappropriate’ behaviour, and the spatial dimensions within which these performances occurred. Conducive to Skeggs’ (2004) claim that throughout popular discourse class is made knowable via technologies of knowledge; albeit knowledge of the working class as dangerous, uncontrollable and unmanageable, Charlotte located the working class ‘thug’ within her (re)constitution of the middle-upper classes:

Charlotte I went for a walk and I live like in the middle of the country, and then our next door neighbour is from Franklin city centre and she’s like quite thuggy if you know what I mean?

Me Thuggy?

Charlotte Yeah you know what I mean? They’re like the biggest farmers in our area people don’t go near them, they’re that scary yeah and like really thuggy if you know what I mean?

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Building on this deduction of working class behaviour, Hollingworth and Williams (2009) suggest that for the participants in their study the working class body denoted a threat and therefore initiated a fearful response. For the girls at Franklin School, the presence of a ‘chav’ impelled a similar affective response:

- Lucy [working classes are different because of their] Behaviour. When you see chavs you just see them like they walk so weird
- Aqua Like really *intimidatingly*, they sort of walk up to you and it’s sort of like *scary*
- Roxy If I, if I walked past a chav I would actu [doesn’t finish the word]. If I was with my mum or dad I would just be like ‘can we go like the other way?’ I’m I’m not joking, I would not want to go past a bunch
- Aqua Whenever I am by myself you don’t want to walk past, you know just in case
- Robin I was crossing the road and my mum said ‘are they chavs?’ and they literally turned around and like started going like that at us and *it was like really scary*
- Kate They want you to pick a fight with them
- Aqua They are probably really nice, it’s just that they’ve got this image of being *intimidating* so they kind of play up to it you know?

Focus group 1, 25th June 2010, my emphasis.

This conduct, this unproductive, irrational behaviour that warranted the moral gaze was once more reconfigured and made ‘real’—as a lived experience of class—through the twofold contention of ‘us and them.’ The girls’ invocation of the tracksuit, alongside the associated conduct of those bodies adorned in it was, in this instance, multilayered and offered examples of the wider processes of class making:

- Roxy Yeah because chavs prevent people from actually having fun, like no, because sometimes they all like come . . . [others interject with comments like “in a park” and “in gangs”]. I know it sounds quite harsh they are probably all like quite nice, but some just like stand there smoking, drinking in hoodies [interrupted]
- Paris Drinking beers. They give us the wrong impression
- Roxy And that’s why people go ‘oh like hoodies are really bad,’ people who wear. If we wear hoodies people wouldn’t be like ‘oh I’m really scared’ cause [sic] we might wear like a hoodie just our tracksuit top hoodie saying Franklin School and no one would be scared
- Lottie It’s because we don’t wear the full body thing and if some people do they wear sort of a more nice version of it

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Through living and yet condemning the public discourse of the ‘hoodie,’ Roxy, Paris and Lottie drew on the popular rhetoric of the ‘tracksuit hood’ as symbolic of the out of control and unruly. Simultaneously they problematised these understandings by drawing on their own ‘correct’ and proper conduct when wearing a ‘hoodie’—the irony of their declaration that they do in fact wear tracksuits irrespective of their damning critique of them earlier in the workshop was not lost here. The discrepancy between both acts of tracksuit adornment, was focused at this time on the social markers; the power axes which were inscribed—literally and symbolically—into the fabric and onto the body. The classed body was read through both the hoodie itself and its emblazoned Franklin School logo as opposed to “superdry tracksuits⁵” (Aqua, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010). In so doing and distinguishing between clothing in such a manner, the neoliberal subject was made visible and known according to a rational, entrepreneurial, autonomous ‘self’ (Allen 2008; Hollingworth and Williams 2009). What is more, the ‘choices’ that were made (when

⁵ Superdry is the flagship brand of the supergroup UK fashion retailer. Informed by the company’s website this fashion retailer offers “quality detailed clothing and accessories.” Available from: www.superdry.com/about-us [Accessed 10 June 2011]. Anecdotally, this range of clothing is recognisable for the clear and bold superdry branding on its products.

actually wearing the tracksuit) with regard to behaviour were criticised for being ‘inappropriate’, specifically ‘inappropriate’ for girls of their age.

The ‘othering’ of the female ‘chav’ because “they just like smoke and drink” (Paris, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and “get into drugs” (Lottie, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) made clear how the girls positioned and distanced themselves from this conduct: “it’s like stop” (Paris, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010). Developing what appeared to be at times a fictitious comprehension of behaviour and its effects, the girls’ talk explicated the idea that there were ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ ‘choices’ to be made with regard to how one conducts oneself. The key was to have a certain element of restraint:

- Roxy And some just drink and like smoke because like smoking apparently fills you up
- Paris Yeah they drink a lot or a bit
- Roxy [after consideration] But then I don’t think smoking is chavvy because like loads of upper, especially the upper class, they have lots of cigarettes and everything. Not cigarettes, cigars and stuff and yeah. But quite a lot of chavs do smoke because they get it from like their older brothers or something

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Following Skeggs (2004), the smoking of a cigar was conceptualised as ‘respectable excess;’ it was contained excess that was “acceptable within limits if practiced by those who are seen to be capable of self-governance and restraint” (Hollingworth and Williams 2009, p. 474). The cigar then, as with the fringe hairstyle and body size was something that the girls recognised as being pertinent when performed in the correct manner, by the correct social class and with self-discipline and constraint (Skeggs 2004). Roxy’s (workshop 5, 25th May 2010) observation that “like block fringe looks nice on everyone but chavs wear it like hugely [sic]” typifies this. The risks to femininity were incurred when one deviated from the acceptable and established limits. By readily distinguishing, defining and ascribing value and meaning to the body and conduct of the working class female, her bodily performance, be it excessive or not, was constantly scrutinised and located in terms that became comprehensible to the girls themselves and their lived

experiences. The variance and diversity of young femininity was overshadowed by an overwhelming need to categorise and thus understand. As with smoking and drinking alcohol, eating and diet behaviours are constructed in particular ways with particular consequences (Skeggs 2005) for the young girl. Lottie and Charlotte's conversation calls upon a twofold reading of bodily excess:

Lottie And you can pass them off as like working class because they are like really, really big and they wear like these really, really tight tops

Charlotte Either that or skinny

Lottie Yeah no most of the time they are really, really big

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The dichotomy between the working class girl as skinny or fat was repeated throughout the workshop, provoking me to ask:

Me Do you think the size of her body is going to make a difference?

Robin Yeah she's really skinny

Charlotte Skinny or really fat, they aren't in the middle, they're either like really skinny or really fat

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The variegated sizes of female bodies was lost in the girls' analysis as they saw no space for a working class girl in "the middle." This middle ground, this 'normative' space was reserved for *their* bodies, the bodies of young middle-upper class females. As the conversation continued I questioned the rationale they had for prescribing such extreme body differences:

Me Why are they skinny and why are they fat?

Lucy Because they don't have enough money to buy food

- Me They don't have enough money to buy food?
- Monique Or if they do they go to McDonalds
- Roxy Yeah, if you don't have that much you can go to McDonalds
like the whole time and it will be cheaper than buying like, I
don't know, like some chicken and some pasta and like cooking
it. Because like it might, that would be more expensive
- Eva And sometimes they can't be bothered to cook
- Paris Yeah they can't be bothered
- Monique Because they are working

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The girls' narrative focused on the classed body politic in these dualistic terms, this extract, whilst not exhaustive directs our attention to the theoretical intricacies of class, the messiness of its boundaries and how it is understood at the level of the symbolic (Skeggs 2004). In attending to the potential structural implications and the social forces that impact upon the lived experiences of a working class female subject, Roxy's comments—regarding McDonalds as opposed to home cooking as the only viable culinary option—drew upon and contested obesity, diet and health as being purely medical concerns. Rather than the medicalisation and labelling of certain bodies and places (Evans, 2006) scholarly interrogation should remain mindful of, for example, the location of McDonalds (and alternative fast food restaurants) within certain areas of cities and the price and (un)availability of fresh food. Taken together these facets can be seen to contribute to the creation and sustenance of more or less 'obesogenic' environments (Baker et al. 2006; Hillier 2008). However, this counter position concerning the wider implications of life for working class girls was imbued with a competing interpretation that rather than an issue of economic resource and structural inequality, their diet—and body size as evidence of it—was configured according to an *effort* and *responsibility* discourse. Hence Eva's exclamation that "sometimes they can't be bothered to cook."

As a key feature of the neoliberal rationality and ideological position, this discourse of responsabilisation was replete with maxims of self conduct, self monitoring and self surveillance. These technologies of governance that were associated with diet and weight management were considered fundamental to the sculpting of the ethical 'self' and accrued value upon the classed female body. So, whereas the body 'normality' (the homo economicus) conceived by Charlotte as being somewhere in the "middle" was evidence of the moral worth of the individual and a display of the correct investment in the 'self,' Skeggs (2005) notes that this imperativeness towards the ethically complete 'self' is neither garnered in the same way nor possible for all. The cultural playing field is not level and only some tell or display their subjectivity correctly, those 'others' are ushered to the dejected borderlands, their failures attributed to diseases of the will (Skeggs 2005) and the exasperated middle classes are left to ponder the 'choices' they made.

Hall, Coffey and Williamson (1999, p. 501) draw attention to the idea that young people; distinguished as active citizens, are leading the way amidst extensive contemporary social change, they explain that "if there is a general sense in which identities are currently shifting in the UK (and elsewhere) then we can expect to find young people at the forefront of the developments that make this so." Locating the sculpting of subjectivities within the fissures of spatialities, Hall et al.'s (1999) article provokes consideration of the power of these connections in terms of how young girls' locally lived experiences are at once shaped by and intricate to the wider concerns (Aitken 2001) of our conjuncture as it is viewed through a political, economic and cultural lens. Conceiving of space as politicised entails an engagement with it as more than material social relations, looking instead, as Caroline Fusco (2007, p. 46) advocates, towards an appreciation of "socio-cultural geographies" as immersed in the exercise of 'normative' power relations. Add the transitionary nature of youth in terms of the intertwined issues of identities, representations and subjectivities (Hall et al. 1999) and space, for this reason, articulates divisive and powerful gendered, sexualised, racialised and classed lines of flight. Contextualised within a Westernised political climate, Roxy's observation intimates that spatial imaginaries can be read as emergent technologies of governance (Fusco 2007) that offer alternative pedagogies through which bodies and subjectivities appreciated. For Roxy simply being 'in a space' (re)constituted your 'being' in that place:

Like in the centre of Franklin you get like people speaking in a Westcountry accent and you think like chav

Roxy, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

Thus the urban landscape—the immoral urban landscape (Fusco 2007)—connoted class antagonisms and heralded consequences of association for those who were located there. The focus group and workshop narratives below posit the judging and surveying that the girls themselves did of these spaces and those who populate them:

Like when you drive through poor places there are some people, if you go through Broomville [a place in Franklin] then there are people like that there

Charlotte, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

Roxy Charlotte you know when you walk like drive through the city centre and stuff yeah?

Charlotte Yeah

Roxy Oh oh on like a Friday yeah I just see like billions of like twelve year olds

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Friedman and van Ingen (2011) cite that the body is marked by its location, it “is not separate from the various processes involved in the production of space, but is *integral* as “it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived—and produced””(Lefebvre 1991, p. 162, cited by Friedman and Van Ingen 2011, p. 95, emphasis in original). Framing our understandings of bodies, space and power in such a way elucidates how the girls evoked space and location as temporal markers of class. Subjectivities were (re)established based on their position within the city (Hall et al. 1999), moreover these seemingly passing observations about ‘chav’ locale simultaneously concealed and spoke to certain national concerns over an inferred threat to the social order that is conjured by youth ‘hanging around’ on street corners, in bus shelters and sprawled in shop doorways (Hall et al. 1999). These politically and theoretically inscribed spaces and the positionality of the

bodies that inhabit them highlight the lack of productivity and deviance often attributed to working class youth. In drawing upon the ‘other’ as now both bodily and spatially identifiable the girls mapped out and located themselves as ‘us’ and the working class female as “*them* on the streets” (Monique, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010, my emphasis). Of note was the girls’ own position within these discussions, instead of themselves being and experiencing in the spaces they were talking about they were always “*driving through* this quite chavvy place” (Charlotte, Focus group 2, 29th June 2010, my emphasis), their position there was only temporary, their movements allowed them to gaze upon the ‘other’ and skirt around the boundaries of the exotic. Following Reay (2000), space when analysed in this manner, can be understood as a central resource in the young female repertoire which was drawn on to establish the sort of girl ‘I am’ and the sort of girl ‘I am not.’

5.1.4.3 Class(ifying) & ‘Chavs’: Traversing Moral Productivity

Within transformed practices and spaces of regulation there are moves to normalise youth as rational, choice-making citizens (to-be), who are responsible for their future life chances through the choices they make with regard to school, career, relationships, substance use, etc. At the same time there is increasingly sophisticated attempts to differentiate among youthful populations, via the identification of risky behaviours and dispositions (factors) that place at-risk those practices and capacities of the self which can effect a secure transition to these preferred futures (Kelly 2001, p. 30).

Within this study Franklin school is regarded both for its physical proximity within the girls’ lives and also as a discursive space in which powerful public pedagogies of young female ‘normality’ emulate and are permitted to circulate (Harris 2004a). Formulated upon neoliberal projects of government, the value of education; as a symbol of investment and work on the ‘self,’ underpins its middle-upper class appropriation (Hollingworth and Williams 2009; Skeggs 2007). This is especially the case in light of the exchange value it provides in terms of positioning girls as “the ideal subjects for the new socioeconomic order” (Harris 2004a, p. 97). However, this celebratory discourse that prefigures the young girl as a metaphor for social change (Harris 2004a, b; Ringrose 2007) fails to interrogate the particularness and the minutiae of the ways in which the feminine is ‘taken up’ (Ringrose 2007). The reduction of education to market imperatives (exchange value and investment) centralises the individual’s position within this nexus, that is they have to

invest in their future for the long term and the knowledge transfer accrued will add value—bolstering their choice/life biography (Brannen and Nilsen 2005) and clearly depicting them as entrepreneur of the ‘self.’ Conversely ‘chavs’ were constructed as lazy and disinterested in their education. The evaluations that the girls attached to the ‘chav’s’ undervaluing of education took on a decidedly moralistic turn as the conversation between Roxy and Paris revealed:

Roxy And also, and also you see these people in the day, you see these people, and they are not at school

Paris Yeah that gets on my nerves as well

Roxy It doesn’t get on my nerves because *it’s their life*

Paris Yeah I know *it’s their life*

Roxy All of the people that we are calling chavs yeah, they don’t go to school

Paris They have the *option* to go to school, I know a lot of them do, they have an *option* to make their life better it’s not like they don’t

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010, my emphasis.

Consistent with wider policy agendas and governance, Paris and Roxy reworked educational opportunity from a problem needing state provision—educational underachievement as a moral hazard—towards that of the work ethic and productivity of the individual (Carabine 2007). Discourses of responsabilisation and individualisation were palpable through the utilisation of the noun “option” and the impression that “it’s their life.” Within these discourses of individualism there was little scope allocated for the structural dynamics that may have “socialised their non-participating peers” (Rich 2005, p. 502) out of education. Consequently, the girls’ irritation around the female ‘chav’s’ sabotaging of their education can be read in terms of the personalised role of education in their own lives. Education was an essential technology of a moment in which they are precariously placed as the performative precursors for contemporary femininity and they

were expected to take advantage of the opportunities available to them (Ringrose 2007): they are the embodiment of “personal desire [to be in education], hard work [when in education], and good choices [regarding their education]” (Harris 2004a, p. 184 my additions). For the girls education surfaced as the first step in a ‘normalised,’ middle-upper class, life trajectory and accordingly Robin (Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) identified that the working class female who “doesn’t work” disrupted this logistical pathway from education into a career. Returning once more to a preoccupation with the aesthetic and consumerable, the girls extended their analysis of the morality of education and augmented this with a focus on future work and career prospects. The impression that the middle-upper class female goes on to future work was derived from her depiction as being dressed in a “business suit” (Robin, Workshop 5 25th May 2010) rather than “Trakiy [sic] bottoms tucked into socks” (Robin, Workshop 5 25th May 2010). There was a normative expectation around work and (un)employment, one that hinged on the individual’s dedication to the ‘self’ as a project to be worked upon (Foucault 1979), this can be seen through analysis of Robin’s drawings below:



Figure 22. Robin's classed femininity illustrations. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The theoretical thrusts conceptualised so far were somewhat epitomised by Joanna’s proposition that the working class girl that she had evoked was brought up in a household where the “Dad Does [sic] not have no job . . . mum deals with drugs.” Comparatively her

own lived experience that was characterised by her mum and dad having “very gd [sic] jobs” (Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) offered a counter narrative by which her own middle-upper class subjectivity could be reassured:

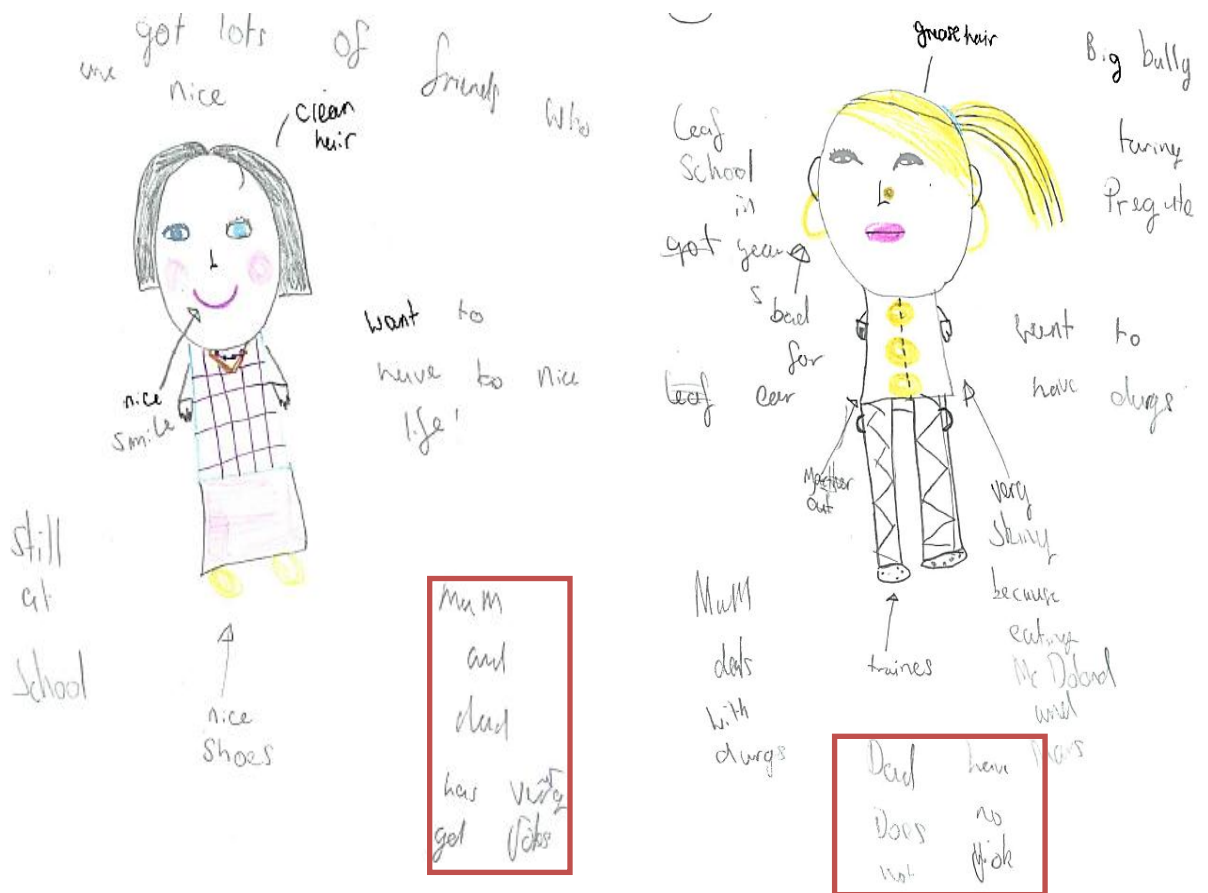


Figure 23. Joanna's classed femininity illustrations. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

The neoliberal reinvention of welfare and the related techniques and technologies of governance promote personal accountability and ‘correct’ consumption as ethics of contemporary citizenship. The consumption of what would be considered undeserved finance; in the form of social benefits, and/or illegal drugs, was regarded as the antipode of this. The sweeping generalisations and what I would consider cause and effect style evaluations that were made during this workshop revealed “the problematic and exclusionary consequences of contemporary regimes of governance that regulate contemporary femininity” (Allen and Osgood 2009, p. 8). Returning to a ‘choice’ rhetoric, the girls beheld the lifestyle of the working classes as a matter of their—invariably bad—decisions and lack of productive investment in the ‘self,’ and they assessed these according to their own moral compass. This compass signalled an individual’s

productivity, asserted middle-upper class values to specific practices and made the schema of moral value apparent as it identified practices and people that deviate: predominantly working class populations (Skeggs and Wood 2004).

Both the working class and middle-upper class girls were afforded and attributed the power and dispensary to ‘choose’ how they spent their time and this served a distinctive purpose as the Franklin School girls marked out and individualised the differences between the two figures’ conduct and actions. Roxy’s (Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) pictorial representation of working class femininity was inclusive of ‘thought bubbles’ denoting what these young woman might be ‘choosing’ to do. In scrutinising the thoughts of Shardonie (the name given to Roxy’s ‘chav’ figure) it was possible to see where the discrepancies may lie for the middle-upper class girl, a figure who is brought into being via her opposition to a lifestyle of “[g]oing out on the town . . . [t]ake baby to Nursrey [sic] . . . [d]ebt . . . [p]aying off debt from our house.” In essence Roxy conceived of Shardonie’s life ‘choices’ as being distinct from her own as she is thinking about “school” and stipulates that “I would never have a baby until I am pass [sic] 18 [sic] years minimum.”

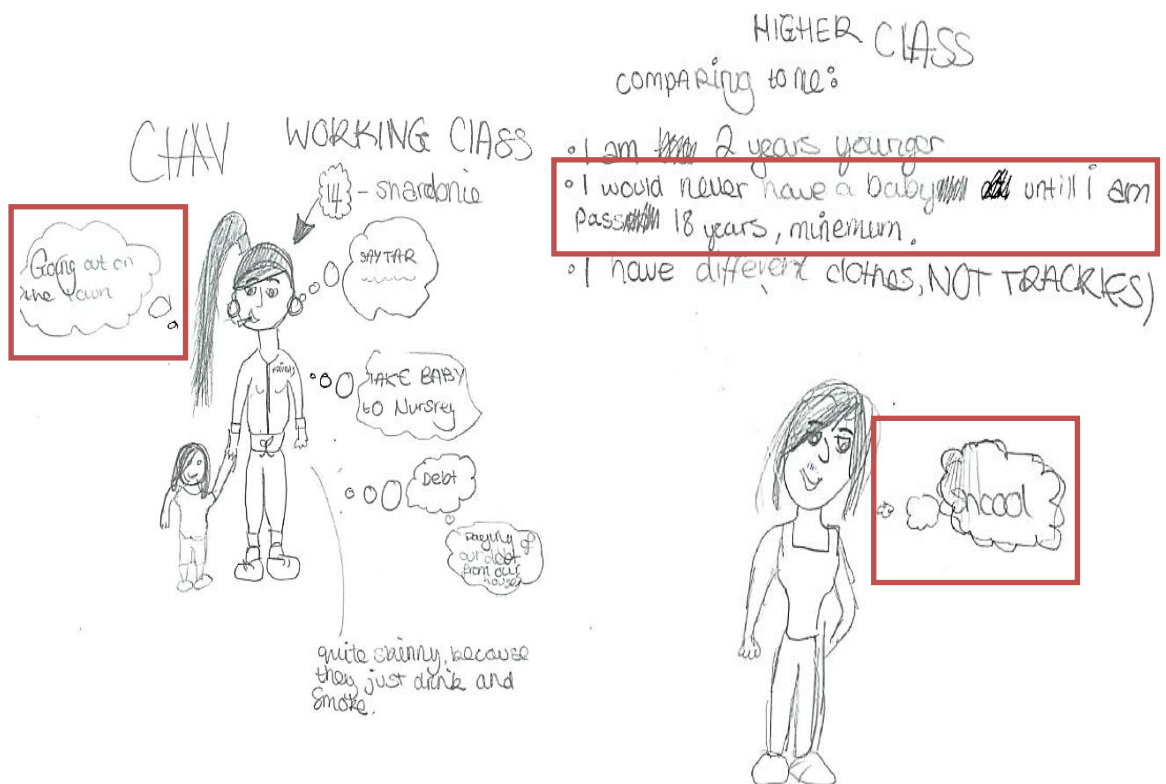


Figure 24. Roxy's classed femininity illustrations. Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Considering both the value of education and the desire to avoid becoming pregnant within a distinctly classed discourse, Roxy's remarks can be seen to conflate the two; such that choosing to leave education prematurely or not valuing its significance and/or falling pregnant whilst in your teenage years became synonymous with a working class subjectivity.

Stephanie Lawler (2004, p. 115) interrogates the formation of the working class female as abject from three perspectives, each building on and augmenting the other: "their bodily appearance . . . their ignorance or lack of understanding; and their inadequacy as mothers." The focus for now falls on one of these "three vectors of 'deficiency'" (Tyler and Bennett 2010, p. 385), that of them constituting inadequate mothers. Analysis of the written, drawn and spoken conceptions of classed femininity and how it was comprehended by a group of twelve and thirteen year old girls was overwhelmingly shaped by their (re)constitution of the working class girl as a mother. Articulated upon or within an atmosphere of contempt and disapproval, the teenage mother seemed to be symbolic of working class femininity for the girls and a significant indicator of how these girls were performing a different version of femininity to themselves:

Robin It's like sixteen year olds with like prams and babies

Lottie That's the desperate lady who accidently got pregnant [outburst
of laughter]

Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Throughout the girls' talk and the illustrations they produced was an understanding that becoming a teenage mother was not only something that was readily engaged as a mechanism of differentiation but it was also to be avoided and ultimately vilified as the last "desperate" act of pathologised and abject bodies. Pregnancy at a young age was discursively constructed as an obstacle in the rhetoric of the 'can-do' girl (Harris 2004a) and thus not representative of the form of idealised femininity that the girls appropriated (Allen and Osgood 2009). The cultural imperative to discount young motherhood as a valid 'choice' (Kidfer 2004) is itself iconic of the changing nature of social policy as it has been mandated throughout the twenty-first century. The cornerstones of New Labour's 'Third Way' (Powell 2000) shifted citizenship and welfare matters and when applied

specifically to teenage pregnancy, New Labour found themselves “caught between a strong liberal lobby anxious to promote safer sex and a strong traditional lobby anxious to discourage promiscuity among the young” (BBC 1999).

The solution was deemed to be within the much publicised “Third Way”—a move to emphasise the autonomous, responsible populous. To all intents and purposes, the political climate, devised as it is upon the needs of late capitalism and a market ethos, deploys strategic policies that seek to minimise, reduce or eradicate altogether those characteristics of youth deemed to disrupt their ability to work: school avoidance and/or low educational achievement, criminality and teenage pregnancy (Carabine 2007). As I write this, British politics has (as of May 2010) seen the replacement of the New Labour government with a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition led by Prime Minister David Cameron. While this ‘change’ in political landscape could provoke one to question the relevance and pertinence of the previous references to New Labour policy I would like to make two comments. Firstly, to this date no publications that specifically address this topic have been released by the new government. Secondly, and reworking Robbin’s (2009, p. 473) with a UK perspective, as and when these publications, documents and papers are put in place, I would not necessarily expect a radically different rhetoric. This is because the entrenched, deep rooted political “moorings of the neoliberal political economy, policy and material continuities,” even when shrouded in discourses of ‘change’ undoubtedly still remain. As a result the best I would apprehend is moderate revision not change per say (see Robbins 2009, p. 473). In view of this, teenage pregnancy and its wider social implications will remain a cause for concern for any sitting government and this is reflected in the attention attributed to ‘bringing down’ the rates through the deployment of technologies of knowledge:

The number of teenage pregnancies in England and Wales has fallen by 4% according to figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). A total of 41, 325 women under 18 fell pregnant in 2008, down 3.9% from 42, 988 in 2007. . . Gill Frances, chairwoman of the Teenage Pregnancy Independent Advisory Group, said it also welcomed the teenage pregnancy strategy being back on its long term downward trend.

"*Nationally, statutory Sex and Relationships Education* will give an extra benefit and government must also ensure all young people have access to contraceptive and sexual health services," she said.

Simon Blake, national director of the sex and relationships advisory group Brook said: "It is good news that the teenage pregnancy rates have decreased and we now need to continue doing what we know works - improving access to sexual health services, *good quality sex and relationships education* in school and the community and supporting parents to talk to their children about relationships" (BBC 2010).

Calling upon teenagers, particularly female teenagers, to manage and monitor themselves—their bodies—responsibly and in a manner that does not detract from their productivity in the work place/education setting can be viewed as a feature of the workfare, as opposed to the welfare, state (McRobbie 2000). As McRobbie (2008, p. 54) proposes, the promotion of ‘normative’ configurations of femininity, located around a girl’s ability to “make good use of the opportunity to work, to gain qualifications, to control fertility and to earn enough money to participate in consumer culture” epitomises neoliberalism at work. Through an exploration of the multiple ways in which the girls conjured up the working class female as pregnant or a mother it was possible to illuminate where and how they saw this figure traversing the boundaries of the ‘normative’ and ‘non-normative’ (Allen and Osgood 2009).

The working class female who was a “single mother” (Robin, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) was accordingly designated as the ‘other,’ the pathological and a body that was beyond governance (Tyler and Bennett 2010) and fundamentally unproductive. As the talk below brings to light, the girls readily identified the pregnancies as untimely, something that was encapsulated by the age designated to each female’s motherhood:

And then umm, and then uhh, you see the really young people walking around with this like five year old kid. It’s like, what are you doing? You can’t have a five year old kid when you’re that young

Lottie, Focus group 1, 25th June 2010.

The working class mother at “sixteen” (Robin, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010), “thirteen” (Louisa, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) and/or “fourteen” (Amelia & Eva, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) stood in marked contrast to the more ‘traditional’ adult locus of motherhood at “[a]bout 35 [sic]” that was invoked by Robin’s (Workshop 5, 25th May 2010) comparative figure (see Figure 21). The working class girl therefore disrupted both

the heteronormative family nexus and (as noted previously) the ‘normalised’ life trajectory of a female in contemporary society—a pathway through education, career, marriage, family. Following Bettie (2003), these prospective stages towards motherhood can be seen to adhere to a middle-upper class and neoliberal ideal of extended adolescence via extended education. The decision to be made was not whether or not to have a baby but rather when was the ‘(in)appropriate’ time to do so. The assumption once more was that these opportunities to decide were available to all and an inability to access them was relocated from being a social problem to one of individual failure and inactive, irresponsible citizenship, such that a historical trend towards working class youth entering adult roles before their middle-upper class peers was constructed as their own individual failings and inadequacies (Allen and Osgood 2009).

Weaved throughout the girls’ experiences and wider popular cultural discourse was/is a moralising tone, further Allen and Osgood (2009) point towards the inextricable link between these circulating body narratives and the formation of the ‘new’ self sufficient and productive young woman as understood in correlation to the labour market and state. Perhaps more than ever, the operationalisation of a discourse of ‘othering’ emerged when the discussion centred on the young pregnancy. The girls comprehend their own—and that of their family/mothers—classed position through explicit discourses of differentiation, the notions of ‘us and them,’ ‘right and wrong,’ ‘appropriate and inappropriate’ were pervasive:

I think the worst are, like one time I was at umm the doctors and this person came in with a pram and she was only like fourteen and the baby was like one. And she, and she like goes to the baby ‘say ta’ [in a Westcountry accent] and I just started; I tried not to laugh cause [sic] of what she said. The baby took a present off another baby who was just with a normal like, with a nice, I don’t know the mum, but she just looked like a normal mum. And so the baby took it off [the other child] and [the young mother] was like ‘say ta’ [in a Westcountry accent]. I couldn’t stop like, I was trying not to laugh. You wouldn’t really want to be teaching, like it was like two the baby; it was like sitting in a pram. I don’t know like some people say ‘ta’ [no accent] but like it was so funny just seeing like a thirteen year old with like a baby who’s like at least two and then them saying ‘say ta’ [giggles] in a really chavvy accent, a really strong [Westcountry] accent

Roxy, Workshop 5, 25th May 2010.

Femininity, as a classed subjectivity that exists in various and alternative ways, was encapsulated for Roxy in the doctor's surgery scenario presented above. The social cues (Tyler and Bennett 2010) of pregnancy/motherhood and accent were highlighted here as mechanisms by which the girls distinguished between females, the reaction of giggling and laughter that accompanied Roxy's 'say ta' impersonation assumes that the girls did not think that teaching non-accepted, non-conventional middle class vernacular to children was desirable conduct. Furthermore, in situating "the normal looking mum" the girls were able to draw comprehensible and concrete comparisons as they worked to situate their own subjectivities:

- Lottie The mum [in reference to a discussion about the 'normal' mum in the doctor's surgery] didn't have a baby when she was like twelve or something
- Roxy Yeah, the mum was like thirty two she was wearing like, like
- Paris Classy clothes
- Roxy Mummy clothes yeah, do you know what I mean? Like a loose like jumper, but then like jeans and like yeah like yeah she was talking not like 'ta' [in a Westcountry accent]. She was talking like, I don't know, like some people might think we're posh but like just a normal [trails off]
- Paris Like nicely
- Lottie Like in a polite way
- Paris Yeah a polite way
- Roxy Yeah in a polite way and like teaching the baby, not teaching the baby how to read, but like giving her books and stuff. And then like umm, you see that person who's like thirteen with her hair up like there [high ponytail] in a band and brushing her hair like back like so

So, the girls manufactured an image of two mothers—two female bodies. One was fourteen or thirteen and the other thirty two. One was notable for her (under)age, her appearance and her accent and she was readily identified as ‘other’ to the “normal,” “nice,” “polite” mother who, whilst still identifiable in terms of her clothing (but not scrutinised in any way near the same manner), was also recognised for how she was performing motherhood e.g. giving the child a book to read. By invoking both the conventional middle-upper class, white, heterosexual professional women—the neoliberal mother, the “Yummy Mummy” (Allen and Osgood 2009, p. 6)—and “that person who’s like thirteen with her hair up like there” the girls were not only (re)establishing the middle-upper class life trajectory as the ‘norm’ they are also creating a specific space for themselves to live, work and be female. This space, when taken in literal terms, was not susceptible or scrutinised for its immorality (Tyler 2008) rather it was often an educational space and a space of productive investment.

Bottero (2004) asserts that class does not have to be explicitly recognised, verbalised and depicted for class based processes, judgements, assumptions to be made, the insidious nature of a classed politic then entailed that class became writ large on the body. The young mother or the pregnant teenager was one such way in which class coalesced around the tensions related to young femininity and power. The respect, admiration, praise and validation given to the middle-upper class girl who succeeds in education and goes on to University and future employment; establishing a stable financial position before embarking on motherhood, was regulated by and relative to the ‘other,’ pathological figure of humour—the young ‘chav’ mum (Skeggs 1997, 2004; Tyler 2008)—that was conceived as a drain on the welfare system and in need of constant surveillance. At no point did the girls, popular culture, or political sentiment for that matter, offer an alternative reading of young pregnancy. More often than not the undercurrent was one of moralising judgement and the ‘inappropriateness’ of this behaviour. The Labour Government’s correspondence on the issue were often laced with a disapproving discourse, from Tony Blair’s (1999, cited by Carabine 2007) more explicit references to shattered lives and blighted futures to Gordon Brown’s recourse back to the imperatives of technologies of knowledge in the governance of risk:

And I do think it’s time to address a problem that for too long has gone unspoken, the number of *children having children*. For it cannot be right, for a

girl of sixteen, to get pregnant, be given the keys to a council flat and be left on her own.

From now on all 16 and 17 year old parents who get support from the taxpayer will be placed in a network of supervised homes. These shared homes will offer not just a roof over their heads, but a new start in life where *they learn responsibility* and *how to raise their children properly*. That's better for them, better for their babies and *better for us all in the long run* (Gordon Brown 2009, my emphasis).

There is a dismal picture presented that leaves little or no scope for the positive achievements made by young mothers—this is despite qualitative studies that highlight otherwise (Carabine 2007; Walkerdine et al. 2001; Wilson and Huntington 2006)—or the structural conditions that make and legitimate pregnancy as the only viable option, to be divulged. Moreover, Carabine (2007) notes that the success stories that are not marginalised tend to be framed, once more, in terms of a neoliberal expression of individual exception and hard work.

The cultural climate is one undercut with uncertainty for young girls, they are expected to be and readily accept the position as an object of the male gaze (see chapter four), while having to simultaneously make the right, market orientated decision to postpone parenthood. The movement between the performance of a (hetero)sexy subjectivity and a female's productivity—in terms of education, employment and parenting—is not an issue of no sex but rather the right sort of sex, at the right time, with the right person (McRobbie 2008). McRobbie (2008, p. 85) contends that this is a key caveat in neoliberal policy: she cites that young women are expected to not “procreate while enjoying casual and recreational sex.” This relation between one's body and the body of ‘others’ is implicated in a middle-upper class struggle for definition (Skeggs 2004) and it is around these issues that the discursive limits and boundaries of a classed femininity fall. The ethos and ethics of market imperatives congealed with the complexity of (hetero)sexual femininity and the family nexus to position the working class young girl as pregnant and that pregnancy was thus (re)constructed as deviant, irresponsible and ‘abject’ by the middle-upper class girls.

Female sexuality, and the sexual activities of young women both a/effects and produces bodies and behaviours that are a derivative of a “complex political technology” (Foucault 1976 [1979], p. 127) that by virtue of differentiation is classed. For Foucault (1976 [1979],

p. 127), “sexuality is originally, historically bourgeois, and . . . in its successive shifts and transpositions, it induces specific class effects.” From this perspective, the competing sexual, political and economic discourses asymmetrically position the body of the ‘other.’ As was the case in Franklin School, the ‘other’ body and its social relations (Foucault 1976 [1979]) worked not only to highlight ‘incorrect’ life ‘choices’ but also to carve out a space for the girls to understand and sculpt their own bourgeois subjectivities (Allen and Osgood 2009) as distant and distinct from those drawn on the page and spoken about so openly during our workshops and focus groups.

The theorisation and contextualisation around the girls’ mobilisation of a distinctly classed femininity has been shown to be twofold, firstly, in terms of exploring the ways that the girls engaged the figurative ‘chav’ as indicative of the performative working class female. This euphemistic transference (Bromley 2000) restricted, in the main, their observations towards, what has become, a homogenous and pervasive—mediated—cultural icon. Secondly, through an analysis of the class boundaries as they were envisioned around the aesthetic/bodily, the behavioural and the moral productivity of citizens (Harris 2003), the working class female was seen to be readily engaged and called upon in the management of middle-upper class female subjectivities.

The deployment of class as a means of differentiating between females—between an ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ body politic—became a central mechanism through which the young girls established themselves and their subjectivities as such. This (re)constitution of the middle-upper class female as ‘normative’ was explicated through the interrogation of what the working class ‘other’ girl wore, how she accessorised and decorated her body (the aesthetic), how she conducted herself, her ‘choice’ of behaviour and the public, spatially specific, presentation of the ‘self’ (the behavioural). Far from devoid of moral fissures, class was finally considered as a reflection of an individual’s productivity in terms of their investment in the ‘self’ as a neoliberal citizen. The working class female was discursively constructed as not valuing education and more often than not pregnant at an ‘inappropriate’ age or life stage. Although there were occasions where apologetic references with regard to stereotyping and generalisation entered into the girls’ discussions, the recourse to the neoliberal sentiments of autonomy and responsibility were still omnipresent throughout the workshop and focus groups. Looking and/or behaving in a certain ‘inappropriate’ way—read a working class way—was considered solely a

matter of 'choice' (Harris 2004a). Making the wrong decisions with regard to the initiation of an individual choice biography (Brannen and Nilsen 2005) entailed consequences for the body as an economic commodity. That is it reduced the exchange value of the young female body precisely at a time when it was/is being mobilised and endorsed as the postfeminist 'can-do' girl fantasy (Harris 2004a; Hollingworth and Williams 2009).

At the same time as the girls' reaction to and engagement with the task of identifying lower class femininity attributed meaning to the figure, these value judgements, statements, images and moments of disgust provided ontological status, inciting the working class female-as-'chav' into being. Effecting much more than symbolic embodiment (and not wanting to discount the serious implications this may have), the figurative and metaphoric have very real implications for those interpolated in such a manner. Put another way, the rendering visible of those considered as antithetical to the neoliberal model can, according to Silk and Andrews (2008, p. 406), operate as a form of "ocular authoritarianism . . . the pernicious, discursively based subjectification of the degenerate body," and as Tyler (2008, p. 29) underscores:

We can think here of the way in which "signs of chavness", such as the wearing of chav identified clothes or labels have been increasingly used to police access to public spaces, such as nightclubs and shopping centres since 2003: A BBC online news headline from 2004 reads "'Chav' ban plan to deter thefts: Police are trying to cut crime in shops—by banning customers wearing 'Chav'-style clothes" ("Chav Ban" 2004). What these "Chav Bans demonstrate" is the ways in which the figure of the chav materialises and is realised in everyday practices.

The form of class contempt enacted in the labelling of some individuals as 'chavs' was suggestive not only to the divisions that emerged to differentiate between females (in this instance 'appropriate' femininity) but further it can be seen to draw the lines and construct the boundaries between different sorts of whiteness. The female 'chav' is the embodiment of the white working class; that lazy, welfare dependent, disposable, dirty populous with whom divisions along the lines of purity and virtue can be drawn. The purpose, Skeggs (2005) notes, of this rhetoric is that it allows for a disruption of whiteness whereby privilege and success are not a given. In this vein the vilification, criminalisation, monitoring and surveillance of white (and black) working classes, (re)establishes a class hierarchy and maintains the middle-upper class body and experience as 'normative.' It is

to the ruptures that are produced and unhinged by notions of whiteness and blackness that I now turn.

5.2 RACIALISED FEMININITY

The social realities of the ‘can-do’ rhetoric (Harris 2004a) have been shown, thus far, to be gendered and classed into and onto the young female body, they position the young British female as an active embodiment of a version of ‘appropriate’ corporeality (Giardina and McCarthy 2005). Placed at the intersections of a (hetero)sexy, middle-upper class subjectivity, attention is now directed to unpacking the ways in which blackness and whiteness emerged as meaning systems that informed the (re)construction of this femininity. Borrowing from Harris (2004a), the discourses of the ‘can-do’ girl and the imaginary of a contemporary, active and powerfully positioned female, are understood to cloud over and obscure entrenched patterns of racial hierarchies and ideologies that “reaffirm whiteness as normal” (Pyke and Johnson 2003, p. 36) and privilege white femininity as more virtuous and beautiful (Baker-Sperry and Grauerhoz 2003).

Grounded upon and developed from that which Azzarito (2009) terms an economy of visibility, the enduring version of femininity must be regarded as being one that is interwoven with discourses of race, especially as racial subjectivities become “hidden from view” (Taft 2004, p. 72). Noting the ways in which race enters or is absent in the discussion and/or performance of femininity is, following Taft (2004, p. 72), important because it points to a nexus of transference whereby girls are oft discussed as “racially neutral.” The effect of which is to ‘normalise’ white femininity and marginalise racially diverse girlhood. Seemingly off hand and fleeting utterances such as “*surely* a bit lighter skin colour” (Robin, Workshop 3, 13th May 2010, my emphasis) imply some prior determinism, some form of ‘normalised’ discourse about the ‘lighter skin’ tone/colour that allowed the girls to affirm, without fear of being revoked, a rhetoric that privileged one body over the other. In what follows I grapple with, theorise and unpack how this valorised figure was (re)constituted as white and I excavate how, amidst a discourse of superficially inflected racial acceptance, certain bodies were more or less visible than others: more or less consumable and/or pathologised.

Like the discussion of classed femininity, race entered the workshops as a result of my purposeful initiation of conversations and directed observations. For the most part I utilised the pedagogic forces of the media as methodological strategies to apprehend how race and mediated racialised representations were engaged and experienced by the girls (see appendix five). Bound by their social context, the girls' everyday experiences were shaped largely by the absence of a racially diverse feminine subject; in fact Lottie highlighted that "everyone in this room is white" (Focus group 1, 25th June 2010). Race then entered the girls' lives and talk in a polymorphic and momentary manner, however the emergence of, or rather invisibility, of whiteness offered a telling exemplar of the restrictive and powerful ways in which 'normative' femininity is (re)configured in our present era. The result of this nonexistence was a reiteration of the white body as 'normal,' furthermore and poignantly, when blackness or the racialised 'other' was encountered it was oft comprehended in ways that appeared both as ostensibly progressive—in terms of tolerance and acceptance of racial diversity—and yet equally stratifying. Race was complexly articulated as concurrently visible yet unremarkable and guided by Smith Maguire and Stanway (2008), perhaps this was attributable to the girls' own biographies: their markedly middle-upper class, white subjectivities. I infer therefore, that if the presence of whiteness was mostly invisible—and when visible addressed in multifarious ways—it may suggest that the girls were "less reflexive about—and more conservative of—some of the very categories . . . that individualization is assumed to undermine and self-production is assumed to negotiate actively" (Smith Maguire and Stanway 2008, p. 68). Aided by the representation of an aestheticised raced femininity, a nestling of two competing narratives in which race surfaced had the effect of producing a binary that positioned whiteness as always already different from "black/red/yellow others" (Stam 2001, p. 484). Whilst missing the multiplicities not only between cultures but within cultures, observations such as those made below by Louisa, Charlotte and Monique also constructed the black women in terms of the racialised space she occupied that is all the time in relation to the white girl (Weekes 2004):

Louisa You know it's good that they, you know, have different skin colours

Charlotte Which is good

Monique Yeah

Charlotte There was a black one which is good

Workshop 2, 6th May 2010.

Race at this moment was present and addressed but in a manner that Giroux (2003b, p. 196) may contend was “stripped of its critical and social possibilities.” The conversations that percolated between the girls as they observed and played “We Cheer” were fractured, self-conscious and momentary:

Lottie They only give nice skin tones

Lucy That’s quite mean

Kate No no I think that’s right

Group Yeah

...

Lucy It’s quite good how they’ve got different colours, skin colours

...

Lottie They are all the same skin colour except for the back two

Roxy Yeah, that’s quite racist

Lucy How most of them are white

Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

Predicated upon the (in)visibility of the ‘other’ cheerleading bodies in “We Cheer,” racism—that is race stripped to phenotypes and purely aesthetic representations as opposed to a social category—was responded to, but the political possibilities of this racism, in terms of what it entailed for social order (Giroux 2003b), for the construction of femininity was never spoken of. The girls seemed to stop short of engaging in a critical

discussion of race. In short, race was noticed and racism was considered troublesome, yet the broader consequences were incomprehensible to the Franklin School girls. In fact when urged to employ a questioning and analytical sensibility as part of the corporeal curriculum envisaged as part of the research project, this became ever more perceptible:

Me In “We Cheer” they showed the different races and we kind of talked a little about race and femininity. Is there anything anyone else wants to say more about that? Did you think it was good or bad or what did you notice about the kind of [interrupted]?

Charlotte I didn’t think it really mattered because you know what’s real and you know what’s fake. Like you know in tv programmes, like you now know that there are people out there so it doesn’t really matter what they put. If you know what I mean? I don’t think it matters

Amelia Well it doesn’t matter what colour you are at all, unless you’re racist

Charlotte So they shouldn’t try, shouldn’t be trying to make a point, it should just be normal

Me Yeah ok

Felicity It’s good that they umm, put different colours on there and it’s not just white people

Amber Yeah else [sic] someone will come along and say that’s racist

Monique Yeah but you know that even if we are a different colour none of us are going to look like that anyway, and they’re still fake, and we still know there are different coloured people

Me Do you think that umm, young girls of different races but your ages would go through like different experiences to what you go through?

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

Within this extract the researcher, that is my own, voice is clearly present. Inspired by a need to delve further into the shoring's of 'normality' I actively and at times uncomfortably—but all the while reflexively (see chapter two)—tried to expose race. But it seemed, given how 'normalised' the discourses were, the girls did not really possess the vocabulary to talk openly and in a self directed manner about a racialised subjectivity. So, even as racism and race as distinctive 'markers' of difference, inequality and structural conditions may no longer be a viable political statement for these young girls to be making, or a facet of their social underpinnings, scholars such as Giroux (2003b), Gilroy (2005) and Bonilla-Silva (2006) recognise not a reduction in racist sentiment but a revised or 'new racism' that is operational in spite of the claims that prioritise our colour blindness. This 'new racism' did indeed resonate throughout the girls' interactions.

Thus, in an era of racial invisibility, in an era where the lived experiences of girls will "mostly will be the same" (Joanna above) irrespective of racial differences, a language to speak of the actuality of race and ethnicity as remarkable contingencies of social life (Roberts 2007 quoting Paul Gilroy) was amiss. Racial diversity was made seemingly redundant, not mattering. The conception that we are somehow thought to have moved beyond race however sits paradoxically with the literature and sentiments of the girls' talk that posited that racial differentiation has in fact not reduced. As we started to look at the representations of race that populate the mediascape, an innocent, yet utterly provocative, observation revealed clearly that race mattered, was visible and was being actively (re)constituted. When observing and playing "We Cheer" Lucy wrote and verbalised that "all the pretty ones are white and ugly ones are dark" (Lucy, Workshop 3, 13th May 2010). At that moment 'appropriate' femininity intersected with whiteness in a way that entailed that race *was* exceptional (Gilroy 2005) and was being as vehemently experienced and articulated just in alternative and competing ways. Further race was being (re)imagined both along the lines of the physical and within the realm of the (popular) cultural in oppositional terms. For the girls themselves and within their everyday lives there may no longer be an issue of 'racism,' race may not emerge as an explicit point of vilification due to their minimal encounters with it. However, and significantly for this study, when probed the circulating discourses pertained to something far more complex, and subtle

than that. In fact the plethora of forms through which race was mobilised, experienced, represented and lived, offered an understanding of race as a pedagogical force (Giroux 2003b) that was deeply invested in and upon the body:

- Charlotte Some people do look dodgy
- Stephie Not like normal people, not like normal black people
- Charlotte Because like in films it's like made to look like the baddies are the black, *like black is the colour of the bad and white is the colour of the good*
- Stephie Yeah so like that might, that might push against if you were black, that might not help you in like general

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010, my emphasis.

When the girls did navigate and negotiate the raced body they did so in a manner that made it important for me to advance. What is more, through my deeper enquiries into the ways in which the racialised body's contours carve out a political and social map of our time (King 2001) this thesis corresponds with and is attentive to cultural studies criticism that is concerned with the everyday politics of racial performativity (Giardina 2003).

5.2.1 *Race as the (In)visible Trope of Neoliberalism*

[I]n an era “free” of racism, race becomes a matter of taste, lifestyle, or heritage but has nothing to do with politics, legal rights, educational access, or economic opportunities (Giroux 2003b, p. 199).

The pluralising imaginary that discounts race as an issue to be addressed (McMurria 2008) within social policy is marked by the processes and influences of neoliberal globalisation. Henry Giroux (2003b) clearly explicates the ways in which the invigorated marketplace and an individualised culture of blame breeds a derision in which race is reworked and in some instances relabelled in ways comprehensible when “power is uncoupled from matters of ethics and social responsibility” (Giroux 2003b, p. 195). Race—as a matter of societal and structural consideration—is negated under neoliberalism as issues of civic value become privatised and engulfed by financial incentives. Thus, structural inequalities

and racial hierarchies are regimented to historical artefacts of the nation state (Kane 2004), and/or even—as Eva’s comments below revealed—dislocated from a contemporary Westernised ‘reality:’

But that’s their like culture, like everybody in their culture probably is like that. Like if you see on tv and stuff when the African, or whatever they are, they all look the same. They all wear the same clothes, like all those skirts and have those big baskets on their heads [laughs a little self consciously], and they like walk round the streets. Like they all just look the same, they’re all like practically the same height, they wear not like the same pattern or anything, they all wear the same kind of thing, cause [sic] I think that’s their culture they have to wear that

Eva, Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Our present juncture hails the individual and their character as the sole determinants of success or failure. Racial problems are therefore not the concern of public bodies or reform nor are they viewed as any coherent and consistent social imperative. For Eva, the racially diverse ‘other’ girl was held in a curious juxtaposition for she was *locatable* via her *dislocation* overseas. Following the directives of Eva, the removal of race from Western social agendas gestures once more towards privatised subjectivities that are comprehensible via a language of the ‘other’ and the market.

Forwarding the notion of race as distinctly market-oriented calls attention to the submersion of racial politics to a point of financial capital, a factor that was eloquently and insightfully brought to the fore by Kate:

On the “We Cheer” thing, going back to the skin colours, they have to, I mean it’s going to get more people to buy it if they have black people as like sort of different races

Kate, Workshop 7, 16th June 2010.

Given the permeability of borders, the diasporic movement of people, capital, products and the repositioning of the market, Kate’s exposition points to the hybridised, ghettoised realm of the popular that dominates our “late-capitalist commodity-sign culture” (Giardina and McCarthy 2005, p. 148) and is suggestive of a commercial, political and

financial capitalisation on race as an exotic commodity (Giroux 2003b). Giardina's (2003) commentary on Gurinda Chadha's film *'Bend It Like Beckham'* is instructive here in grounding the deployment of race throughout popular culture in terms of 'stylish hybridity'—"an influx of performative representations of hyphenated persons and culture(s) occupying leading spaces in mainstream media (television, film, and music)" (Giardina 2003, pp. 66-67). With Paul Gilroy (2005) and Henry Giroux (2003b), Giardina (2003) problematises the presence of these purportedly transgressive cultural products. These entirely aestheticised 'race' representations are read as 'tokenism' and race therefore can be sold to white and black youth alike (Giardina and McCarthy 2005). In fact the girls were willing, amenable consumers for whom the diversity on display was seen as progressive:

it's [sic] good that they have a choice of skin tone

Nina, Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

What demands attention though is how these instances of racial diversity and the occurrences of the racial 'other' have the effect of effacing the "harsh realities witnessed in the everyday interactions between and among diverse segments of the population" (Giardina 2003, p. 67).

5.2.2 *Popular (Physical) Culture: Playing with Race*

Toys, games, films, magazines are imbued with a sense of the pedagogical, they carry a source of power with regards to what they choose to represent and how these representations are made (see Giroux 2004a). As my theorising and doubly articulated methodology (Livingstone 2007) became realised (see chapter two)—that is became part of my interactions with the girls—I endeavoured to supplement my critical reading of the 'Media Text' (Fusco 2006) of the Nintendo Wii game "We Cheer" by elucidating not simply the multiple axes of power that formulate and are articulated by/through contemporary forms of physical culture but how these pedagogical forces speak to, fold back on and are lived by young women. Taking direction from these readings (Francombe 2010, see the prologue), my early exchanges with the girls and the key theoretical moments that surfaced, I introduced race—through "We Cheer" and media images—in ways that located it as part of the (re)construction of the female subject.

Figure 25. Images from Workshop 7, 16th June 2010. Clockwise: Serena Williams, Sania Mirza, Shakira, Monique Coleman (High School Musical), the "We Cheer" Cheerleaders and Jenna Ushkowitz (Glee)⁶.

At this point in time I mobilise once more the digital territory of cheerleading as it was experienced, observed and apprehended through “We Cheer,” as well as multiple images sourced from numerous media outlets. I do so as they are but partial examples of the way in which race is brought into the fore and ‘played with’ as part of a neoliberal corporatised culture, specifically as part of popular culture targeted at young girls. Interrogation of these cultural artefacts alludes to a stylised aesthetic that appears to draw on the idealist representation of girls (Adams 2005), giving credence to notions of “racial performativity . . . neoliberalism, identity politics and white” (Andrews and Giardina 2008, p. 403) femininity. As cultural technologies of the present, they can be understood within the cultural and political context of new, interactive, media technologies and the implications they have for the hyperreal depictions of the ‘normalised’ female body can be discerned.

5.2.2.1 Representing Race: Booty Queens⁷ & Alien Eyes

I like big butts and I cannot lie
You other brothers can't deny
That when a girl walks in with an itty bitty waist
And a round thing in your face
You get sprung . . .

Sir Mix-a-Lot, 1992, “Baby Got Back.”

Within physical culture and popular culture more generically, race is present and comprehended in ways that are not consistent with the propositions made by some that this is the result of some achieved equality. Therefore to return to and rework Giardina (2003), while the girls’ gaze may, on one level, fall upon and applaud the aestheticised representations of race they encountered, the status quo was never challenged or questioned, in fact underlying racial hierarchies were actually cemented by the flippant and inconsequential commentary imparted by the girls. For Giardina and Metz (2001, p. 210)

⁶ The images are available from (clockwise): <http://www.stpetebootcamp.com/booty-camp/>
<http://www.topnews.in/people/sania-mirza> <http://www.muzix.org/page/6/>
<http://www.fanpop.com/spots/high-school-musical/images/2600731/title/high-school-musical-3-monique-coleman-photo> <http://uk.wii.ign.com/dor/objects/14345396/we-cheer-2/images/we-cheer-2-20090723021225817.html> <http://gleehab.com/2010/02/12/glee-kids-go-glam-on-the-pages-of-elle/jenna-ushkowitz-glee-makeover-elle/> [Accessed 1st June 2011].

⁷ The reference to ‘Booty Queens’ in this subtitle is taken from Weekes (2004).

it is the “proliferation of images and practices” combined with a “non-politically charged discourse that assume[s] that ethnic minority communities [are] homogenous and somehow representative of an authentic and unified culture.” Drawing out these notions of unification and authenticity, essentialises the cultural politics of race in a way that the over-generalised and reductionist signs, representations and beliefs that are mobilised act, according to Merskin (2004), as simplistic forms of identifying a particular group of people. Interestingly, individual integrities, nuances at a level of the personal were condensed to a homogeneous and unitary being:

Felicity Lots of black people are really good at singing, like Beyonce and
 umm like, Leona Lewis

...

Joanna They're really good at sport

Felicity They're better at rapping and things

Amelia Yeah, why is that?

Joanna And really good at sport

Me Joanna go on

Joanna Boys that are kind of black are really good at sport, they're
 actually amazing

Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

The collections of stereotypes that bind the ‘raced’ body to a supposedly stable, static position constitute what Stuart Hall (1997) denotes as a ‘regime of representation.’ That is the image of the body; how it accumulates across the media and the visual effects it carries, develops into a discursive site through which knowledge concerning race comes to be realised in the Westernised white imaginary at a particular moment in history. The stereotyped racialised body is of course contested and the essence of the ‘other’ will vary according to context, however a recourse to exaggerated and simplified physical features maintains and ensures “social and symbolic order” (Hall 1997, p. 258). With Hall (1997),

the physical form became the principle way in which the girls distinguished the black ‘other:’

Me [have the] Sessions that we have done, have they raised any issues for you or made you think about anything?

Eva I would say black people are generally a lot bigger than white people

Paris They’ve got bigger arses

Eva Yeah they have big bums

Paris Bigger bums

Eva And they have bigger boobs and they have more here
[interrupted]

Paris Bigger hips

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

Theoretically and historically the black female *derrière* has been conflated with fantasy, fetishism and freakery. Perhaps one of the most explicit examples of a white preoccupation with marking difference was seen through the fascination that encircled ‘The Hottentot Venus’—this is the case of an “African woman . . . brought to England in 1819 by a Boer farmer . . . and regularly exhibited over five years in London and Paris” (Hall 1997, p. 264). Her body was of consequence to two circles, it served as a public spectacle that was commemorated and as a specimen that was inspected and surveyed by naturalists and ethnologists alike (see Hall 1997, p. 265). Hall (1997) cites that she was atypical to the ethnocentric European norm and as a consequence became an embodiment of the pathological. Like Saartje Baartman, Serena Williams’ physicality has been the subject of much scrutiny throughout the sporting media (for a full discussion see Schultz 2005), particularly at the 2002 US Open when Williams wore a—self proclaimed—Puma ‘catsuit’ (see Figure 24). This instance of ‘self’ fashioning facilitated, according to Schultz (2005), a racialised reading of Serena’s body that made known the

black female as different and in opposition to the 'norm' on the tennis tour and contributed to the (re)production of blackness throughout society. When shown images of Williams in the now infamous lycra ensemble the Franklin School girls themselves became the observers of the 'other' body through a distinctly modern lens. Their written responses to the image of Serena Williams captured the distinctively phenotypically orientated way that the black female is often realised:

BUM!!!!, big built, boyish body, muscley, kind of hot & sexy!!!, Big arse (bum), African (Black skin), not natural hair, wide nose, Smiley (big mouth), amazing bum, fake hair, jewellery- to look girlie, Big ass!

Workshop 7, 16th June 2010.

The sensate body in action (King 2001); the physicality brought about by William's physical movement 'frames' the black "ass" according to King (2001 p. 430) as "whipped, chained, beaten, punished, set free, territorialized, stolen, sexualized, exercised." The girls objectified parts of the physical in ways that dismembered the complete body (hooks 2003), however, and referring back to remarks made previously (see chapter four), their preoccupation with looking and compartmentalising the body was not reserved solely for their gazing upon black femininity, it weaved throughout many of their musings. The fascination with the black "bum" in this instance can be read as a stereotypical feature of difference, this was one of the multiple ways in which the girls constructed the black female in oppositional terms (Schultz 2005). Contending with blackness along the lines of accentuated phenotypical features, for example "massive bottom," "wide nose" and "big mouth," naturalised the body in a manner that distinguished it from that which was known and considered 'normal.' Thus, a "symbolic frontier" (Hall 1997, p 258) was mobilised and oscillated between "the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'other.' between 'insiders' and outsiders,' Us and Them" (Hall 1997, p. 258). Black corporeality became the source of power and knowledge about race and its implications for young females:

Me Ok, so what about Serena Williams? [they all start talking over each other]

Lottie Her bum oh my god

Louisa	And her boobs are massive
Aqua	I love her bum [somebody in response: “no” in almost disbelief]
Lucy	I would never be caught dead in that outfit
Lottie	She looks like dominatrix
Louisa	I mean massive bum
Alexia	She looks like she is on steroids
Lottie	Why is she like wearing leather?
Me	So Lucy says that she is not going to get caught dead in this outfit
Alexia	Well she looks like she uses steroids, she’s so masculine, she’s so big
Aqua	She has got an incredible figure though
Jasmine	She doesn’t
Lottie	She has the biggest thighs ever

Workshop 7, 16th June 2010.

The girls conflated Williams’ over-sized body with notions of the over-sexed female who was reminiscent of a “dominatrix,” “wearing leather.” The black female body, in this instance facilitated what bell hooks (2003 p. 124) suggests is the “traditional black pornographic imagination.” Moreover, and in many ways ironically, this hyper-sexed subjectivity—that was made known through the outfit and activity she engaged—also revealed that she deviated from a ‘normative’ slim figure. The attire that accentuated her body also exposed her powerful muscular form; a form the girls equated more to masculinity than femininity. Accordingly, body shape and the aestheticisation of the body

(see chapter four) were seen to manage and be managed by this supposed contradistinction. The following observations made by the girls not only highlight this, but the interpretations presented are also notable in that they draw out some particular moments from previous workshops whereby the femininity of sportswomen and their recuperation of culturally desirable subjectivities through wearing jewellery, for example—a discussion forwarded as part of a closing, conscious raising component of a workshop—was now being brought to bear in the context of racialised, active femininity:

Lottie And yeah she's trying to be a little bit more feminine by wearing
like pearl bracelets and pink bands and dying her hair blonde

Me Why do you think that she is doing that?

India Because she has got such a masculine body

Lucy Because people might talk about her with like a manly figure. If
you just saw her arms it would be like that's a man

Jasmine If she was facing away and she had her hair done up she might
look a bit

Aqua No but she does have an incredible figure I think

Lottie Why is she wearing leather?

Alexia She has a really big butt

[the girls break into the song "Baby Got Back" by Sir Mix-a-Lot, 1992]

Nina She's got a really big bum

Joanna Yeah

Workshop 7, 16th June 2010.

The fusion of these seemingly antithetical features contrasted the black body with that which was anticipated and compounded a sense of truth about the 'other.' The ideological work done by this recourse to a caricaturing of race was enabled by the symbolic and

cultural power of the representation; in this sense the reiteration of the representation gave the stereotype strength and acted as a form of “symbolic violence” (Hall 1997, p. 250) against the black body at a time when racism was publically decried and denied. Young (2000, p. 417) notes that the “discursive regimes operating around the black subject” articulate physical differences in ways that make them not only stable forces but also distance them from the white body. When race representations were conceptualised as undeviating—for example, blackness fixed to a body that is curvaceous (Beauboef-Lafontant 2003)—the girls troubled the representations that they deemed to be in conflict and tension with their understandings. The inclusion of people of colour into the cheer squad in “We Cheer”—one out of the five cheerleaders available to captain the team is black and one is Asian—whilst understood as a “clichéd design motif” (McMurria 2008, p. 322), adding to what Ernst Adams (2003, cited by Higgin 2009, p. 3) refers to as the “visual variety” that appears on the screen, was also a telling instance in which the girls constructed blackness as a “protean marker” (Schultz 2005, p. 339) of a femininity that contrasted with the ‘normalised’ white girl. The bodies of the cheerleaders were, according to the girls, symbolic of dominant beauty standards (Owens Patton 2006) but the presence of the ‘other’ cheerleaders was seen in an assimilationist vein. As the extensive discussion below infers they saw them as assimilating, ‘inappropriately,’ a white body that was not representative of their culturally inscribed, caricatured, body politic:

Me	In “We Cheer” we’ve got different women
Alexia	Oh yeah
Me	That are supposed to be representative of different races
Lottie	They’re not
Aqua	They’re not cause [sic] they’re all the same size, cause [sic] you generally think of black people as more sort of
Lucy	Bigger bums
Aqua	Bigger bums and more sort of curvy like that [does outline of a figure with her hands]

Kate And instead of, instead of taking the black cause [sic] like as Aqua said the big bum. *Instead of taking the black people's look of having big bums and stuff*, they take the small look, like the almost anorexic look

Lottie Even if you change their skin colour to black

Kate They still have the same anorexic look

Lottie So a black person doesn't get the chance to really be on the game

...

Me So you think that for it to show different races it should show different bodies?

Lottie They are all in exactly the same position, they're all exactly the same

Charlotte No but if you were a black person and you saw people thought of you as a big curvy woman wouldn't you get offended?

Lottie No no no but [inaudible]

Alexia But the [cheerleaders] are all quite skinny and you're quite curvy

Aqua No but no not all white people are skinny, you think an English person as big boobs and a little bit chubby and an American person is obese

Amelia Fat

Felicity No Americans are obese

Me These are big generalisations you're making about people

- Lucy Charlotte said they would get offended if they had big butts, but when they see that [making reference to the picture of the “We Cheer” cheerleaders in front of her] they’re going to say like ‘they are trying to change me’
- Charlotte No you would never think that because you would want to look like that
- Kate It depends if their aim was to, it depends if their aim was to single them out like different races

Workshop 7, 16th June 2010, my emphasis.

In light of dialogue such as this, the *non-disappearance* of race is (re)affirmed and whiteness or blackness is therefore comprehended and (re)established as a “key signifier” (Giroux 2003b, p. 193) of an individual’s subjectivity and everyday life. Of specific note is the holistic and homogenised reduction of race to physical phenotypes (Ahmed 1998; Young 2000). Far from discussions of race moving beyond a biological or physical essentialism, the ‘data’ reasserts an ‘otherisation’ of the corporeal as the young girls distinguished between the illustrative femininities found throughout popular culture. Forwarding the above analysis through a discussion of hair care and styling, the girls contended with and evoked an emblematic corporeality to make statements about femininity and its ‘appropriate’ performance:

- Eva I think . . . if there were like just white people on there [“We Cheer”] or tanned or whatever, and they didn’t have any black people or anything, people that are black might say ‘oh we can’t go on that programme because they don’t look like us’. So I think it’s quite good that they have different coloured people on there so then they think that actually they’ve got people that are like us so we could look like them. But I don’t know
- Paris It shouldn’t be an option though, there should be, it should not matter what . . . there should be all these different look-a-likes because there shouldn’t be, there’s no such thing, there’s no such thing as a standard person because everyone looks

different and all that. But I know like England is like blonde
cause [sic] that's, I don't know

India We've never really been England though . . . Anglo-Saxons like
stuff

Paris But I when I think of England I think of blonde, when I think
of England I think of blonde umm, blonde hair blue eyes

Eva Because you wouldn't ever find people, a black person, with
naturally blonde hair would you?

Paris Yeah that's what gets on my nerves. I don't, no offense

Eva Because you just wouldn't, they dye it instead

Paris You see like Rhianna with blonde hair and you know for sure
she isn't blonde, and it's just like why dye your hair that colour
when it just looks ridiculous? Because we all know

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010.

In attributing hair colour to particular bodies the girls established a beauty binary that according to Owens Patton (2006 p. 36) positions black beauty as the “antithesis of White beauty, “White” hair, and “White” norms.” By simplifying bodies to assumed “cultural characteristics,” (Varney 1998, p. 170) Kate, Charlotte, Lucy and Lottie noted the inaccurate construction of the ‘other’ moving body as the extract below depicts:

Kate [Serena Williams] When she was younger her and her sister they
weren't allowed to join the tennis clubs

Charlotte She shouldn't have that hair colour [see Figure 24]

Me What's she got?

Kate Blonde

Me	Why don't you like the blonde hair?
Lucy	It just doesn't I mean like
Lottie	It's obviously fake
Charlotte	It's, it's the blonde, no offense this sounds really bad, but like it's like black and then blonde, it's like black and white it is just such a contrast
Lottie	Yeah, it's like so obviously fake
Charlotte	And it just doesn't look very good

Workshop 7, 16th June 2010.

The girls' engagement with "We Cheer" and certain media images revealed the discursive regimes that operate when a group of white girls encounter the black subject. This concept was explicitly brought to light and then articulated when they undertook a "We Cheer" squad makeover:

Me	What do you guys think about the option to be able to choose your skin tone?
Amber	You want to be tanned
Joanna	Because tanning is like nice
Alexia & Paris	Yeah
Me	Ok
Felicity	No but the colour of her hair looks better if, if she was like blonde like that person [one of the cheerleaders] she looks better with lighter skin
Joanna	It looks more realistic

Felicity I think she looks better in a lighter skin

...

Alexia What dark skin?

Amber No light skin

Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

Through the styling of the avatar's (the digital 'I') cheer uniform, hair style and colour, as well as skin tone and while au courant of De Bois (1965, cited by Giroux 2003b) and Giroux's (2003b) need for a generational language with which to speak the racialised body into consciousness and public discourse, the game can be read as providing white girls with the opportunity to "play the exotic . . . from the security of their largely suburban lifestyles" (Guerrero 2009, p. 193). At once, the conjured notion of the *exotica* (Bordo 1993) invokes ideas about *playing* with difference and *playing* the 'other;' an implication of 'us and them' is aroused—a troubling, unhealthy, unproductive and potentially dangerous digital investment. Represented throughout the exchanges that follow is the way in which Eva and Paris dissected difference. They scrutinised it and positioned it in ways that did not disrupt their knowledge of the 'other,' on this occasion their knowledge about Chinese and Asian femininity:

Eva ["We Cheer"] Had Japanese I think but their like eyes and everything is all the same, so if you're a different colour then you'll probably have your eyes and everything are different colour. A different shape, say if you're Chinese or something you have like eyes like that, but on there if they even have Chinese eyes [looks at the screen], I don't think they actually have it

Me Can you describe Chinese eyes?

Eva Yeah they go upwards I suppose, I don't really know

Paris No like you know Chinese eye like

Eva *Like they're different to our eyes*

Paris Different, different shaping

Eva And they're a bit they close down . . . They all have really straight hair

Paris No some of them don't

Eva No most of them do, and and this might sound really strange, but it's like horse hair I know it sounds really weird

Me Who's this, is this the "We Cheer" cheerleaders?

Eva No like in general like people's Chinese hair

Me Ohh right

Eva It just feels like straw, like horse hair like, because like I go horse riding and stuff and like with their hair it feels the same as Chinese people's hair

Focus group 2, 28th June 2010, my emphasis.

The circulatory, dislocated nature of power makes exotic those bodies that seem 'strange,' different, 'non-normative' and the visible 'other' provokes a sense of intrigue. It is through procedural mechanisms, the process of 'otherisation' and 'exoticisation,' that white, middle-upper class 'normalised' girlhood is established and maintained. This (re)constitution is not, therefore, a determinant of the locatable 'other'—"The fact is 'black' has never been just there . . . it has always been an unstable identity, psychically, culturally and politically . . . something constructed, told, spoken, not simply found" (Hall 1987, p. 45)—because as Stam (2001 p. 477) alludes, "no one is exotic to themselves." In the extract below India flits between understandings of the Asian "We Cheer" cheerleader Ai as super- or beyond- human and her distinctive cultural background, here India, Ai and Asian femininity are caught up in the discursive power of the digital image:

The cheerleaders from the WII [sic] look half human half alien their huge eyes look like those *aliens* with huge black *Japanese eyes*

India, Email correspondence following workshop 8, 1st July 2010, my emphasis.

Like the black body, the Asian female was discerned along simplistic, naturalised and caricatured features of difference. Following Pyke and Johnson (2003, p. 36), controlling images such as those presented in “We Cheer” “reaffirm whiteness as normal and privilege white women by casting them as superior.” By examining the racialised meanings that informed and underpinned the construction of femininity, the girls’ observations and comments whilst *playing* with race were seen as illustrative of how a gendered and raced subjectivity was treated as a body project:

Alexia She does not look Asian

Lottie Really? [surprised at her being Asian]

Aqua She’s got blue eyes [surprised at her being Asian]

Charlotte Her eyes are too big

Aqua She’s got blue eyes though

Alexia And Asian people are kind of yellowy

Workshop 7, 16th June 2010.

Asian girls were deemed to embody a very particular ‘look,’ the fact that Ai did not immediately symbolise this appearance meant that the girls questioned whether she was ‘different.’ The game informs the girls that the cheerleader is from Hong Kong, yet her supposedly non-corresponding eyes and skin tone troubled the girls’ interpretations and in one specific instance the Asian body became invisible because it was not characterised ‘appropriately.’

Roxy I know this sounds a bit racist but it doesn’t, it doesn’t have Asian

Lottie	Yeah it does
Roxy	No it doesn't
Aqua	It does
Roxy	It does? Where?
Robin	The middle one is Asian
Aqua	On the right
Roxy	That's not Asian
Aqua	Yeah it is
Roxy	Well it should have different eyes and yellowish skin

Workshop 3, 13th May 2010.

Roxy's essentialising of race according to eyes and skin tone and Eva's previous references to the texture of "Chinese hair" infers that there was, according to this group of white girls, a way to be British, Asian and black. Exemplifying this, India remarked that to add to the racial diversity of "We Cheer's" cheer squad active Indian femininity should be present and would be ascertainable through the "[s]upply [of] the red dot on foreheads and veils," similarly a Thai cheerleader would have "[l]onger nails: [w]ith nail art" (email correspondences, 14th July 2010). Fluctuations, diversions or examples of racial multiplicity fostered ambivalence and for the most part were avoided so that their narrative construction of race drew on caricatures of difference that subtly marked pathological those bodies that deviated from the mainstream.

Besides this and building on the "hierarchies of femininity which privileged Whiteness and derogated Blackness" (Weekes 2004, p. 143), the potential for difference to be digitally and visually displayed was somewhat undermined by the overall depiction of 'normality' as being white; as being like them. Thus, the occurrences of racial diversity

were actually cemented by the inescapable impression of difference. As epitomised by Guerrero's (2009) insightful exposition of commodified difference and *Bratz* dolls, *difference* is always *different*. Subsequently, even though public matters may not overtly dwell on the supremacy of white cultural values—in fact, we now experience what Gilroy (2005) refers to as superficial integration in sport, music, television, education, the House of Lords and politics as a whole—existing power struggles over which bodies matter reinstate and engender “historical and systematic processes of discrimination” (Schultz 2003, p. 342). In this sense “We Cheer” and alternative cultural technologies (Ouellette and Hay 2008a, b) can be read as serving race according to hipness, style, and accessorising. The young girls could digitally embody an image of the cheerleading ‘self’ in relation to “femininity, consumerism, and difference” (Guerrero 2009, p. 188). Consequently, the racially diverse ‘other’ girl was available for consumption by the white palate (Davis 2009; hooks 1992) rendering the enduring, past and present signification of race—as it intersects with young femininity: a “logic of coupling” (Hall 1996c, p. 472)—into the domains of the physical and consumed (Varney 1998). Ultimately then, whiteness was (re)affirmed “by casting ethnic and mainstream worlds as monolithic opposites, with internal variations largely ignored” (Pyke and Johnson 2003, p. 43).

Patterns of aestheticised popular culture weave together transnational discourses of femininity and racialised public (physical) space (Gonick 2010), such that the current neoliberal climate “itself is a racialized one” (Darnell 2010, p. 414). The racialised female body articulates not only the manner in which racial differentiation can operate negatively through cultural, political, economic and social flows but also how a knowledge of this body as ‘other’ constituted and legitimated the privileged position of whiteness (Darnell 2010). Situating race and more specifically whiteness within late capitalism’s stylised aesthetic, ‘normative’ young femininity was actively negotiated in a way that stereotyped raced bodies as homogenous (Giardina and Metz 2001) and did not move beyond caricatured inventories of the black or Asian subject (Denzin 2002; Giardina 2003). When appreciable, the focus on the ‘otherness’ of the black and/or Asian body can be read as being for the benefit of ‘normalised,’ white, middle-upper class femininity. Through positioning and locating the ‘other’ the girls were able to (re)establish their own subjectivities (Gambaudo 2007).

5.3 NORMALISED BODIES: INTERSECTIONS

Throughout this chapter I have explored the girls' negotiations of a femininity that was distinctly classed and raced. Class, as with race, is considered as relational, interconnected and active in the construction of social relations and formations (Webster 2008). Accordingly the 'data' rippled with moments where race and class discourses intersected, were articulated and emerged as grappling with each other in illuminating ways.

It was the (in)visibility, accessibility and 'consumeability' of the female body that offered and legitimated middle-upper class white girls the space, resources and 'knowledge' to sculpt their own subjectivity as anything but a 'chav' and to understand their own whiteness in oppositional terms. The affective and the corporeal collided, congealed and were negotiated in ways that legitimised certain bodies and denigrated 'others.' These divisions, this 'othering' or making exotic was the cumulative effect of the clothes worn or not, the physicality on display and/or represented in the media, the words spoken, actions taken, the values attributed to certain cultures, habits and lifestyles (Tyler 2008) and the scrutinising of the female body. The white working class female was conceptualised as one body, a body in need of regulation and governance and similarly the static, naturalised black and racial 'other' was comprehended as decidedly homogenous and in the same way naturalised. At the intersection of class and race then, the stereotyping or caricaturing of that which was 'other' operated not for the benefit of those citizen-subjects being surveyed. Instead when we consider the performativity of a 'normalised,' stylised aesthetic, the nuances that persist and impact upon this body were lost as it became—for the Franklin School girls—much more about appropriating the discursive boundaries of 'appropriate' 'normalised' young femininity.

6. CONCLUSIONS & THE CORPOREAL CURRICULUM

you want to be *the woman* in sports don't you?

Charlotte, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010, my emphasis.

you want to look feminine whilst you are doing sports

Monique, Focus group 3, 29th June 2010.

This terrain is defined, not by forces we can predict with the certainty of natural science, but by the existing balance of social forces, the specific nature of the concrete conjuncture (Hall 1996b, p. 45).

Researching within the exciting borders where physical culture articulates with the female body politic, I have interrogated the conception of female subjectivity and (re)presentation and the intersections between lived experiences and discursive constructions of 'normalcy,' as shaped by relevant cultural contexts. In line with the formative work of Andrews and Giardina (2008 p. 403), I have presented a "far-reaching, radically contextual" theorisation of contemporary (physical) cultural practices "and their varied articulations relating to" the sculpting of subjectivities as well as the performance of gender, class and race as it borders the development and rationalities of neoliberal body politics.

Encountering the Westernised female subject who, with Harris (2004b), stands at the corner of neoliberalism and feminism, I have developed a nuanced, culturally inflected, exploration of the way that a group of young girls deployed and utilised certain technologies of femininity as part of their own subjective struggles with a 'normalised' feminised body. There emerged a double bind that was exacerbated by the neoliberal—individualised—ethos of our epoch (Rich 2005). This was a bind in which an 'appropriate' femininity was grappled with, made intelligible and afforded legitimacy, through a concurrent interplay between the gendered and (hetero)sexualised performance of the 'self' and an understanding of the 'self' in light of the 'other:' a bifurcation between the appropriation and embodiment of acceptable and unacceptable young femininity.

In centralising the body as the location par excellence upon which subjectivities were sculpted and power struggles surfaced, I have sought to theorise the lived experiences of the girls in ways that speak not only to academe but also remain relevant to the ‘everydayness’ of the school girls’ lives. Utilising Foucault’s (1982, p. 778) directive, the theorisation of the complicated, complex and at times contradictory experiences that were encountered, fostered and engaged, necessitated a “historical awareness of our present circumstance.” Or as Grossberg (2006, p.2) makes clear, it required the construction of a “political history of the present” in which neoliberal biopolitics intersects with postfeminist media culture in a textured layering that shapes and is shaped by the stories of the body that young girls tell (Gonick 2004).

6.1 TUSSLING WITH TENSIONS: NEOLIBERALISM, GENDER PERFORMANCE & THE ‘NORMALISED’ BODY

Under the aegis of neoliberalism, public and private issues have been reconfigured in ways that are not only dictated by the market but have become depoliticised and entirely individualised (Giroux 2004a). In forging an “alignment between political rationalities and technologies for the regulation” (Rose and Miller 1992, p. 201) of the individual subject, the neoliberal state (re)establishes the notion of the ‘self’ as a ‘do-it-yourself’ (DIY) project (Heywood 2007). The macro structures of a neoliberal ideology are taken up and made personal: impacting upon young female physical subjectivities. Hence, through micro level requisitions the ongoing (re)construction of the ‘normal’ girl manifests itself on the body. What is more, the emergence and dominance of Thatcherite/New Labour/Cameron-Cleggite neoliberal governance, in its various auspices, demonstrates itself as a key socio-political moment that privileges a certain political vocabulary. In marking the notion of ‘freedom’ against social equality and matters of welfare, it has become inserted into political rhetoric, thus the active consumer-citizen—and the harnessing of discourses to account for and promote this—holds a “rivetingly powerful” (Hall 1988, p. 190), but contradictory position. The (re)articulation of the female subject within these junctures and ambiguities then has been underscored by the progressive stories of a generation of women inspired to participate, they are strong, self-assured (Rich 2004), ambitious in their educational and employment aspirations and are having these expectations met by economic reformation which heralds them as vital for our country’s future.

The ‘can-do’ girls to whom Harris (2004a) refers, are corralled to the forefront of the mainstream image of girlhood. These are the educated, flexible, successful, (hetero)sexy, middle-upper class, white girls with whom this project engaged and to whom girls in general are supposed to aspire to and seek to replicate (Heywood 2007). The multiple iterations of a ‘girl-can-do-anything’ discourse (Taft 2004) have been shown as slippery and problematic and the political sentiments and broad social discourses of neoliberalism, bordering as they do an individualised femininity, reiterated a homogenous and monolithic metanarrative of the Westernised young women (Azzarito 2010). Predicated upon a need for conversations that address the “sweeping reach of neo-liberal ideology, power and influence, the production of knowledges and identities” (Silk et al. 2005, p. 4), I contend that the privileged girl is (re)constructed as a powerful actor within free market imperatives. She is incited to embody a distinctly neoliberal subjectivity: one that is understandable in terms of its quest for self-fulfilment, self-conduct, self-monitoring and investment in the ‘self.’ Engendering, as the case may be, a distinctly new language of affordances and ‘freedom to choose’—a voluntary visceral vocabulary laced with late capitalist shoring—and originating from and pulsating throughout the ubiquitous visual media, this female subject exists and embodies certain (phenotypical) representations that are reflective of the conjuncture. However, this is a subjectivity that is still wrought with struggles and contradictions. As (hetero)sexiness is performed and maintained, ‘traditional’ and ‘conventional’ power dynamics are not so much made redundant but reconceived and reworked. Old forms take on new meanings that are specific to the contextual dictates:

Women are no longer required to be chaste or modest, to restrict their sphere of activity to the home, or even to realize their properly feminine destiny in maternity: Normative femininity is coming more and more to be centered on women’s body—not its duties and obligations or even its capacity to bear children, but its sexuality, more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance (Bartky 1990, p. 80).

This contemporaneous study and theorisation of the performative female body within the materiality of the every day, revisits and takes guidance from scholarly outputs in the area of gender and girls studies but encounters them with a reinvigorated need to locate the young woman who stands in the precarious position where feminism is interwoven with neoliberal biopolitics: this is the call for Western girls’ studies today (Harris 2004b). Taking forward the cultural insights garnered from my theorisation of the neoliberal female subject, and at all times remaining mindful to the centrality of the female bodily

property (Gill 2007b), I looked to unearth and bring to light how the girls themselves experienced, embodied and related to these ‘demands’ upon their subjectivity. In explicating the performance of gender through the micro political technologies of femininity, I articulated the ways in which their practices resonated “more broadly the dangers and opportunities of [our neoliberal, late capitalist moment] . . . for its self-inventing subjects” (Harris 2004a, pp. 7-9). For the girls the ‘dangers’ of experiencing, communicating, directing, learning about, instructing and sculpting their subjectivity converged upon their successful, ‘appropriate’—read not excessive—and considered deployment of various technologies of femininity (popular [physical] culture, the gaze, diet and exercise, aesthetic stylisation) and the resultant manipulation and utilisation of them in the performance of a desirable form of young femininity. The individual and collective ‘working through’ of gendered performances were not without moments of contradiction; the narratives were often filled with tensions and were not wholly coherent. It is in these flickers of contestation that the ‘dangers’—it would be amiss to interpret ‘dangers’ as a completely negative construct, these instances of risk and unease often provide(d) the most generative, bountiful and worthwhile (scholarly) accounts—for (feminist) physical cultural studies research lie.

My entre into the political space between young girls’ agentic, self-realising subjectivities and the wider cultural milieu allowed for empirically informed ‘theorising out’ and critical dialogue that captured the negotiations of the young girls who were living more complex lives. The dominant discourses, images and embodiment of educated, knowledgeable, resourceful and economically viable contemporary girlhood, formulated as it is upon “freedom, power and success,” (Harris 2004a, p. 9) alluded to a particular politics of femininity; a feminisation that became ‘attached’ to the body, one that was gendered, power charged (Taft 2004) and doing the ideological work of broader systems of governance (Burman 2005). Furthermore, the messy impression of this femininity was not without its consequences for those who do not ‘fit,’ those bodies that do not matter. Throughout the thesis I have sought to articulate and trouble the Franklin School girls’ occupancy of a ‘can-do’ (Harris 2004a) position in a way that sheds light on the technologies that so shape these girls and yet speaks also to how their bodily practices further served to demonise and eviscerate those who ‘can’t do.’ The active mobilisation of individualised and responsibilised discourses of female subject hood have been shown to prohibit, impede, hide, conceal or make invisible social inequalities that pose challenges to

all girls achieving the ‘can-do’ status. I am pointing here towards a formulation of femininity in which only those that can and have—the required ‘resources’—can be the ‘can-do’ girls of the present.

Despite a tendency to do so, girls cannot then be discussed in homogenous terms; rather their subjectivities are gendered, classed and raced. The performance of gender throughout neoliberal societies draws on and invokes an imaginary of active citizenship that is devoid of a language and vocabulary of—and yet entirely representative of—the multiple social discourses of classism and racism. This problematic operates dualistically as it reduces social oppression to the level of the individual (posing considerable challenges for some girls) and tellingly offers some girls the discursive space for the (re)constitution of their privileged subjectivity (Taft 2004). Simply put, the circulating body of the ‘other’ manifested itself as a marker capable of distinguishing between females, that is, within the available cultural discourses of femininity it provided the middle-upper class white girl with an opportunity to sculpt this subjectivity and maintain their ‘normalised’ position. Although I think that it is important to reiterate the point that this, in and of itself, was a project (of the ‘self’), one in which ‘choice’ and ‘freedom’ was constrained by discourses of consumption and heteronormative gender expectations.

The young girls’ conceptions of ‘normality’ took shape around and through pathological (Rose 1989), ‘other’ bodies and these bodies’ deviation from the ordinary and anticipated made ‘normality’ known through situating a subjectivity that it was *not*:

The notion of the normal child . . . has an ambiguous status in these technologies of subjectivity. Normality appears in three guises: as that which is natural and hence healthy; as that against which the actual is judged and found unhealthy; and as that which is to be produced by rationalized social programmes. Criteria of normality are simultaneously used to construct an image of the natural (Rose 1989, pp. 130-131).

In listening to and interacting with, girls that were striving to be ‘normal’ and acceptable I have not only theorised these experiences but I have also interrogated and remained attuned to the potential experiences of ‘others’ and the cultural discourses that (re)produced them as a site of transgression (Duits 2008). I probed into the truth effects (Walkerline 1990) or what Foucault (2008, p. 18) terms the “truth games” of the ‘normalised body:’ looking at what these meant for ‘other’ girls and what they tell us about the female body politic. The everyday negotiations of the girls vacillated around their

navigation of an ‘appropriate’ way of being in order to belong (Duits 2008), ensuring a reiteration of their position as the ‘norm’ and situating deviance as something removed from their subjectivity. The (re)presentation of an ‘appropriate’ girlhood can hence “marginalize or render invisible many other possible ways of being a girl,” (Griffin 2004, p. 42) constituting “certain “girl” positions as unsupportable, incomprehensible, or incompatible with “normal” girlhood” (Griffin 2004, p. 42).

The inter-discursive gaps (Rich 2004) opened between a desirable and undesirable femininity made discernable, although at times through silence (Johnson et al. 2004), a ‘normalised’ body that was (hetero)sexy, classed and raced. A trenchant critique of the neoliberal paradigm (Gill 2007b) and the idiosyncratic neoliberal subjectivity—that is premised upon a fusion of the body and its performance of a certain form of femininity—has therefore been shown to be filled with complexity and contradiction, revealing moments of autonomous questioning, complicit compliance and overt differentiation. This research has aimed to augment our understanding of the wider, encompassing conjunctural moment; to provide a historically specific understanding of society through studies of the physical particular. My desire to theorise the lived bodily experiences—the empirical—meant a concerted recognition of the need for polyvocality, interdisciplinarity and a fluid conception of articulation as it informed both theoretical and methodological approaches (Slack 1996).

6.2 FOCUSING THE FEMALE BODY: THE “PHYSICAL WITHOUT GUARANTEES”

Within the murky, clouded and blurred boundaries where various social forces congeal, are contested and intersect I have forwarded the non-fundamental and non-deterministic imperatives of a “Marxism without guarantees,” modifying it through an Andrews (2002) inspired “Sport without guarantees” and arriving at a conception of the “*Physical* without guarantees.” Each of these spheres of recognition incorporates an awareness that prior determination with regard to cultural struggles—the axes of power that articulate around the meanings and politics of social spaces, events, practices, texts, experiences—are never determined in advance. Conjuncturalism of this kind instead necessitated advancement from a position of correspondences, non-correspondences and contradictions (Andrews 2002; Grossberg 1997a; Slack 1996). Prefigured upon a physical cultural studies sensibility,

the call for a radically contextual core to our theoretical and empirical ‘dalliances’ in the field is made even more alluring by an explosion of the noun ‘sport’ to a richer understanding of the various iterations of the physical (see Prologue).

The tacit, sensuous body, its fleshy sinews, its movement and its (in)activity as locus of social, political and economic structures, offers more fulfilling, reconceptualised and dare I say more advanced methodological trajectories than those permitted when one remains limited to the (albeit misleading) competitive, institutionalised ascription of ‘sport’ or ‘sportswomen.’ By this I mean to point to the ways in which the girls vehemently articulated an everyday ‘appropriate’ femininity on, with, through and beyond the sporting body, this was a body no different in its configuration or performance. The active ‘sportswoman’ was implicated in a broader cultural discourse of femininity that was ubiquitously located; she was not a distinctive, locatable figure. So, physical activity became another, yet important, site whereupon the female flesh was the foci, physicality was acknowledged and managed according to prevalent discourses of femininity.

Additionally, by expanding the everyday lived experiences of the discourses of (un)desirable femininity I saw signs of the way in which the girls sought to understand themselves and sculpt their subjectivities in ways that were characterised by their learning and their grappling with control. The care of the ‘self’ and the management of femininity was epitomised by the girls’ conversations in which their mastery of, for example make up, was actively expressed. Insofar as these experiences could be regarded as banal occurrences, scraps of the ordinary (Frow and Morris 2000), they also (re)present “a meaningful space where girls make sense of and articulate what it means to be young women in a culture that treats the surface of the body as central to expressing the feminine self” (Best 2004, p. 198). A full explication of how the schooled space enabled and precluded this type of ‘learning’ was suggestive of a destabilising and expanding of the type of *education* undertaken. So ‘learning’ in an organisational, curricular sense flanked a vibrant, animated and affective *physical performative pedagogy of subjectivity* that was realised and performed by and through the young body (Paechter and Clark 2007). The effect of this simultaneous shifting between and commingling of pedagogies was to move my analysis beyond more formal learning contexts and in so doing it made salient the discursive currents of youth, gender, physicality, society and education that converged and permeated upon the cultural space—Franklin School—and thrust(ed) body pedagogies (Rich 2010,

2011) into the core of this study and into the life-world of girls (Ryan 2007). The proposed myriad of the physical and the pedagogical, a learning-the-body, ushers forth not just the (desirable) parlance, but a form of analysis and exploration conducive to the conceptual underpinnings inherent in physical cultural studies.

Further, and in speaking to the methodological potential of projects such as this, the noticeable impact of corporeal movement, contact (Giardina and Newman 2011), proprioceptive politics—that problematise the mythologies of scientific research paradigms—seemingly elicited and allowed for a fuller exposition of the cultures of the body that were being experienced (Giardina and Newman 2011). When the girls moved—that is danced along to “We Cheer”—their body practices and performances reverberated with social discourses and critique and searching questions were replaced by more vigorously felt, gender, class and race specific, body politics. With Tangen (2004, p. 21), the moving body appeared to “trigger sensory activity that the consciousness in turn experience[d] as feelings.” Reflecting upon this, and enabled by a Denzin and Lincoln (2000) inspired researcher as bricolage concept and the concomitant demands for methodological multidisciplinary and creativity; I would endeavour to suggest the integration of the physical as a pivotal force in our intellectual engagement. This thesis contributes to knowledge methodologically, in the sense that the body that acts, sings, moves and dances should be mobilised at as many points in the research process as possible. I suggest that through these entanglements, and our scholarly attempts to deconstruct them, we can seek to enact an “interventionist, reflexive, reciprocal, and practiced method” (Giardina and Newman 2011, p. 46) that centralises the performance of physical femininity.

6.3 A PHYSICAL PERFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY OF SUBJECTIVITY: CRITICAL CORPOREAL CLOSURES

I consider it part of the moral responsibility of my critical feminist praxis to attempt to transfer these politics into practice (Morris-Roberts 2004, p. 221).

Building on Giroux’s (2001a) performative pedagogy I call forward the aforementioned *physical performative pedagogy of subjectivity* that reworks and retains the necessity to promote a radical democracy (Kellner 2001) and enhances the enterprise through a turn to the

physical form. In centralising the body as it intersects with a “commitment to radical democratic social transformation” (Kellner 2001, p. 221), I too push for politically motivated research, a critical pedagogy of female experience and the positionality of the researcher as oppositional public intellectual who intervenes upon and confronts inequality and refuses to be defined “through the language of the market or through a discourse that abstracts cultural politics from the realm of the aesthetic or the sphere of the social” (Giroux 2001a, p. 6). My appropriation of this border work suggests that this thesis is bound to a political and moral commitment to critically analyse the cultural and pedagogical, locate the historical specificities of the conjuncture, and ‘theorise out’ in a way that not only names the problems in society but produces critical public spaces in which action can take place (Giroux 2001a).

The provision of a space and opportunity to de- and re- construct taken for granted bodily forms of knowledge (Denzin 2005; Kincheloe and McLaren 2005) was facilitated by the *Critical Corporeal Closure* that marked the end of each of the collaborative workshops. Through these dynamic conscious raising conversations, through verbalising social linkages and intricate webs of experience (Christians 2005), my moral duty to intervene meant my movement between, and decentering of, discourses of the centre and the margins and called on me to promote the girls’ commentary in a manner that acted as a catalyst for conscientisation (Christians 2005; Freire 1973). The understandings we (re)produced were indicative of the individual and collective struggles of the girls to know the ‘self’ and a rupturing, problematising and disentangling of the discursive ‘otherisation’ that sustained and grounded their body knowledge. Critical immanence (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005), as it rippled throughout the qualitative research strategies employed and the political sentiments of my cultural work, “involve[d] the use of human wisdom in the process of bringing about a better and more just world . . . In the context of immanence, critical researchers are profoundly concerned with who we are, how we got this way, and where we might go from here” (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005, p. 309). A *physical performative pedagogy of subjectivity* makes an effort to make the political more pedagogical and the pedagogical more political (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005; Robbins 2009) and was brought into actuality in the girls’ production of posters that critiqued the “representations, images, and signs” (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005) found in mediated forms—“We Cheer” (see appendix two for a selection). These pockets of negotiation, where the oppositional voice tussled with compliance, drew together the critical dialogue I

initiated weekly with regard to various gender, class and race intersections. My role as the researcher can thus be comprehended by my dedication to creating links. Within this thesis I seek to “[j]oin the dots. Tell politics like a story. Communicate it. Make it *real*. Present impassioned polemics. And [I] refuse to create barriers that prevent ordinary people from understanding what is happening to them” (Roy 2004, cited by Andrews and Giardina 2008, p. 409).

The practice of writing, the process of theorising then, became defined by my role as morally accountable public intellectual and not solely by the demands for the transmission of abstracted, neutral ‘data,’ in fact, some of my inquiry “may never show up in the academic world” (Guba and Lincoln 2005, p. 211). Though present in the process of ‘doing physical cultural studies,’ and whilst totally embedded in the ethical, moral, political and critical epistemological orientations of the study (Denzin 2005), the critical conscious raising stratum of the project has been at times absent from the writing. Like the parent meetings, these elements of the research became purposeful “in the immediate context, for the consumption, reflection and use of indigenous audiences” (Guba and Lincoln 2005, p. 211). ‘Doing’ physical cultural studies in such a way enabled individuals, loaded as they were with multiple discernments, investments and motivations to encounter, negotiate and “come to terms with their everyday experience themselves” (Christians 2005, p. 151). Therefore, the collective ‘knowledge’ building, communitarianism and criticality of the physical cultural studies sentiment commits us to, what Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) term, a pot pourri of communicative activities that are not bound to the rigours of scientific dissemination but instead endorse “pedagogies that encourage struggles for autonomy, cultural well-being, co-operation, and collective responsibility” (Denzin 2005, p. 944).

Tasked with the ‘job’ of retelling these bodily experiences there is a further demand—one that was exacerbated by the conscious raising component of my research—to situate the inhabited researching body that explores this empirical space. I occupied a position that was, in this instance, recognisably feminised, heterosexual, white, middle-class, battling with intersubjective tensions and filled with politicising intentions. By means of reflexively (re)presenting and communicating our (that is both mine and the girls’) internal politics, a physical cultural studies undertaking successfully makes the shift between this internal gazing, wider economic and political interests and the “imbrication of power and

subjectivity” (Miller 2001, p. 2). Animated by power dynamics and the ways in which they shape and are shaped by the experiences and sculpting of subjectivities, this research has mobilised a critical interrogation of contextual formations (Giardina and Newman 2011) through a dialectic mapping of the cultural and the subjective, moving backwards and forwards between the lived experiences of the mediated body, the (schooled) female body, the active and politicised researching body, and the late capitalist, neoliberal landscape. The unpicking and rupturing of intricate motions between the macro and the micro, the cultural and the local, the state and the individual, incorporates and channels an understanding of subjectivity as an apparatus of governance (Rose 1989) and points to a physical cultural studies project that has something (important) to say about the control, ‘freedom,’ subjectivation and democracy of everyday life (Miller 2001). Subsequently, the “*physical* without guarantees” that forwards a morally sacred epistemology (Lincoln and Denzin 2000) and a *physical performative pedagogy of subjectivity*—that is genuine in its concern for democracy—cannot be ignored.

6.4 TAKING GIRLS SERIOUSLY: THE TASK FROM HERE

Within the neoliberal discourses available young girls are positioned and (re)positioning the ‘self,’ they are (re)working, (re)constituting, resisting, (re)affirming and affording credibility to a homogenous, ‘normalised’ female subjectivity. As has been emphasised throughout, the girls’ talk was littered with contradiction and ambiguities as they actively consumed cultural products and sculpted their subjectivities. In making visible the discrepancies between the girls’ inquisitive, complex and critical lived experiences of (physical) cultural technologies (Weekes 2004) and their seeming ‘inability’ to extend this criticism to their own embodied experiences (that is they readily disregarded the super-slim figure of the “We Cheer” cheerleader, celebrity or magazine image and yet themselves desired a thin body, distinguished other girls as ‘chubby,’ and deployed technologies of femininity in order to achieve this form of corporeality) I have shown the dispersed, insidious and intricate dynamics of power as it enabled and yet simultaneously maintained ‘normative’ bodies. Notably, I am not arguing against, nor am I privileging, the girls’ voice or the value of their experiences when they held to account certain cultural forms and mediated representations. Rather, I hope to have shown, theorised, become acquainted with and expounded the ways in which the apparent ‘autonomous’ and ‘freely chosen’ appraisals presented actually mask, blur and at times conceal “an implicit

endorsement of neoliberalism and its attendant assumptions” (Heywood 2007, p. 117): a governance of girlhood. The image of the healthy, natural girl, that girl who was/is the epitome of the neoliberal self-made, self-realised subject, that body of *bionormality* and acceptable femininity that the girls appropriated, operated twofold. It was regarded according to the emergent, powerful position of the girl in Western cultures and also in terms of its servicing of silence—a silencing of the structural conditions that delineate between females—that made the body possible, knowable in the first instance (Heywood 2007).

The interdisciplinary nature of this thesis is striking, allowing the research to transgress and combine disciplines in order to better elucidate the articulation between young girls’ physical subjectivities and notions such as biopolitical neoliberal governmentality, gender performance, and the ‘normalised’ body as a distinctly classed and raced imaginary. Thus my theorising, interrogations and empirically, or experientially, driven insights can be brought to bear on a diversity of research spaces such as, critical psychology, sociology, critical race and ethnicity theory, media studies, girls studies, health, social policy (a far from exhaustive list) (Andrews 2008). This thesis occupies a hybrid theoretical/methodological position, one that treads the discursive spaces between the subjective everyday lives of young girls and the historical present; it is a multifaceted focus on physical culture and the lived experiences of specific populations. Following McLaren (2000, p. 185), I further our scholarly comprehension of these young females’ physical subjectivities—as they were turned back on themselves, as they gave rise “to both the affirmation of the world through naming it, and an opposition to the world through unmasking and undoing the practices of concealment that are latent in the process of naming it”—through combining and integrating the analytics of girls’ studies and the body. As was indicated in the prologue this research, out of necessity, evolved to be more than a study of the sporting empirical, this project is a critical cultural analysis of the physical (Silk and Andrews 2011). That is, as the field of physical cultural studies develops and moves towards an understanding of a “*physical* without guarantees,” the fractures and tensions that coalesce around and are related to the girl, femininity, the body politic, (in)activity and the wider cultural and social forces of power should be driving our research encounters.

I have enquired into and ‘theorised out’ the cultural politics of the female body in the late capitalist context, interrogating the thematic lines of flight concerned especially with politics, pedagogy and critical approaches to body. But throughout I have implied a “state of perpetual flux” (Silk and Andrews 2011, p. 28). There is obviously room, and there will remain a need, to make audible the silent voices of girls, to contextualise this girl culture, to disrobe the cloaked class and race discourses upon which a subjectivity of ‘normality’ has been shown to be formulated and to trouble the inherent meanings of lived experiences that are localised (i.e. restricted to our school-based interactions) and culturally specific (i.e. Westernised). When binary positions are suggested, when fluid manifestations are proposed, when oppositional politics and positions are forwarded, the potential for further, explorative research becomes pertinent. As radically contextual, predicated upon intervention, purposefully multi-modal and multimethodological and dedicated to the exploration of the salient questions of contemporary power, this is a project that has only just begun. This doctoral thesis is merely the proactive and urgent call to attention (Silk and Andrews 2011). The task for the future then, becomes not so much about reconciling the *limitations* of this study, but rather about the development and establishment of new collaborations, new circuits and networks of power and combining these with the theoretical insights from “previously unimagined disciplines” (Bush 2009, p. 126), it becomes about expanding the elaborate web of dependency, relations and experiences that infiltrate the everyday lives of individual subjects, it becomes about opening up and making visible, audible, comprehensible the myriad of societal conditions and possibilities and off course it becomes about the dissemination of these in dynamic, illuminating and meaningful ways.

Motivated by and committed to social causes and social demands for change (Miller 2001), contextual critical analysis recognises that the physical, in its innumerable iterations, is articulated to the integrated economic, political, technological forces that mark bodies along specific gendered, sexualised, classed, raced and ability lines (Andrews and Giardina 2008). Whilst entirely at ease with mobilising complex theorisation in order to better understand the empirical, and being dependent upon this theorising to intervene and operationalise a *performative physical pedagogy of subjectivity*, physical cultural studies is not solely about an unequivocal relationship to a theory. As Wright (2001, p. 134) cites, it is “never about finding ‘the right theory,’ or demonstrating one’s theoretical acumen, or playing some theoretical chess game of one-up-manship. It is about understanding what is

going on, and therefore, it is about finding out whatever theoretical positions will enable that project.” As a result, it is the political imperative that we must remain vigilant to (Andrews 2008), it is the issues of ‘normativity’ and privilege that mark off the discursive space in which feminised, (hetero)sexy, middle-upper class, white subjectivities become centralised and simultaneously marginalise ‘other’ girls, it is the uniqueness of a focus on female physicality and its articulation of cultural hierarchy and power, it is a willingness to bring forth the researchers voice,—their gendered, sexualised, classed and racialised subjectivity—it is the capacity to sit comfortably with disciplinary, theoretical and methodological complexity, it is about a co-constructed contribution to knowledge, it is about harnessing and being accountable to a moral, democratic and ethical agenda and bringing it to bear on the research process (Giroux 2001a), it is about the body, it is about the young female body.

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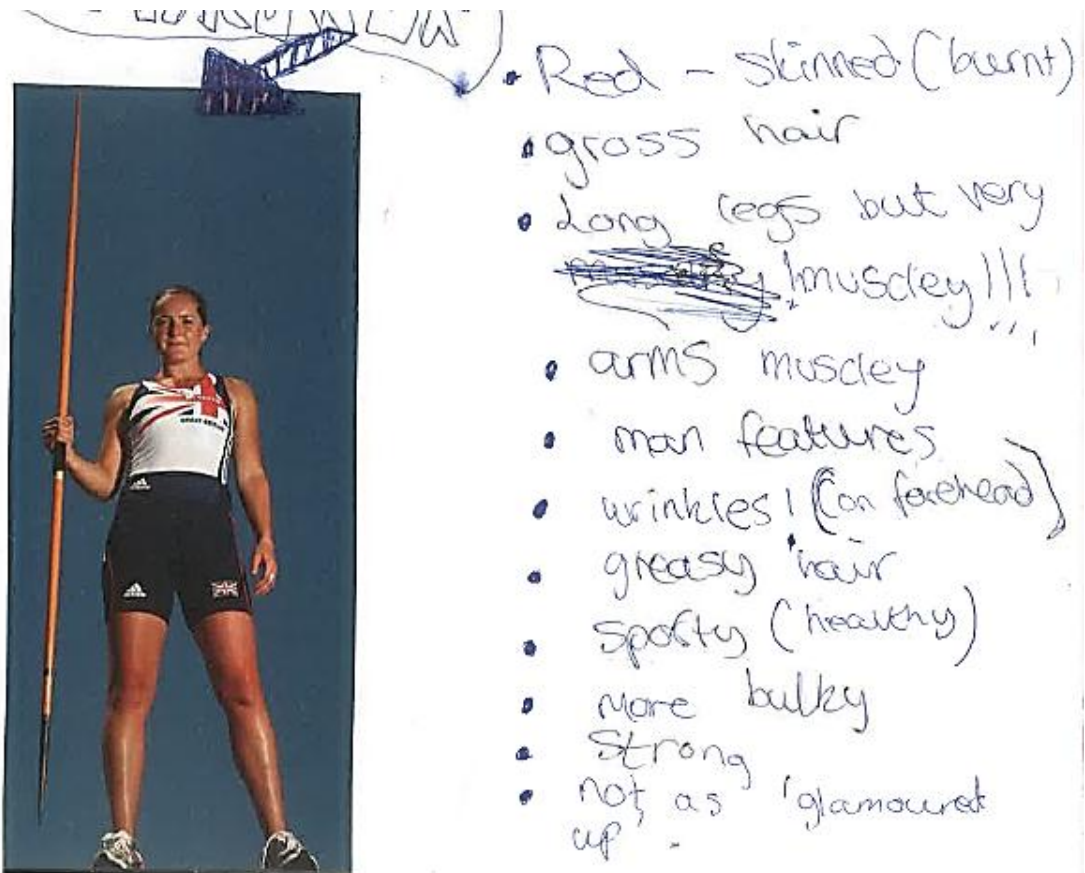
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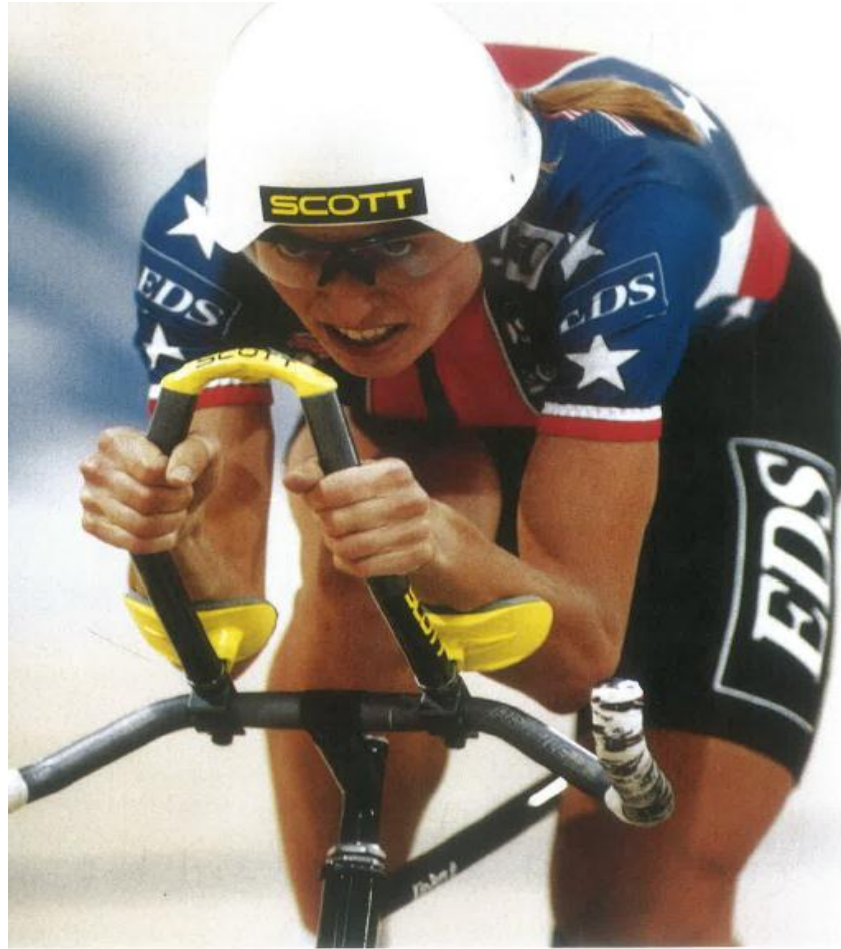
APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

Appendix One: Example Responses to Game Face Images



Appendix One: Example Responses to Game Face Images



Not glamorous.
Not pretty.
Muscly, skinny
Looks like shes working hard and competitive
Long hair
Tanned
Not much make-up
Good role-model
Wearing the right equipments.
Small boobs.
Fit
Angry.
Cycling
Not a nice helmet
Clothes that make you feel hot. and not nice

Appendix One: Example Responses to Game Face Images



For me a bit too muscular.
They've got huge legs and
6 packs, too much.
They are a bit shorter than normal,
They would fit soot make up
high heel and a dazzling outfit,
except for the muscles they
have really nice legs.
and smaller boobs.

Appendix One: Example Responses to Game Face Images

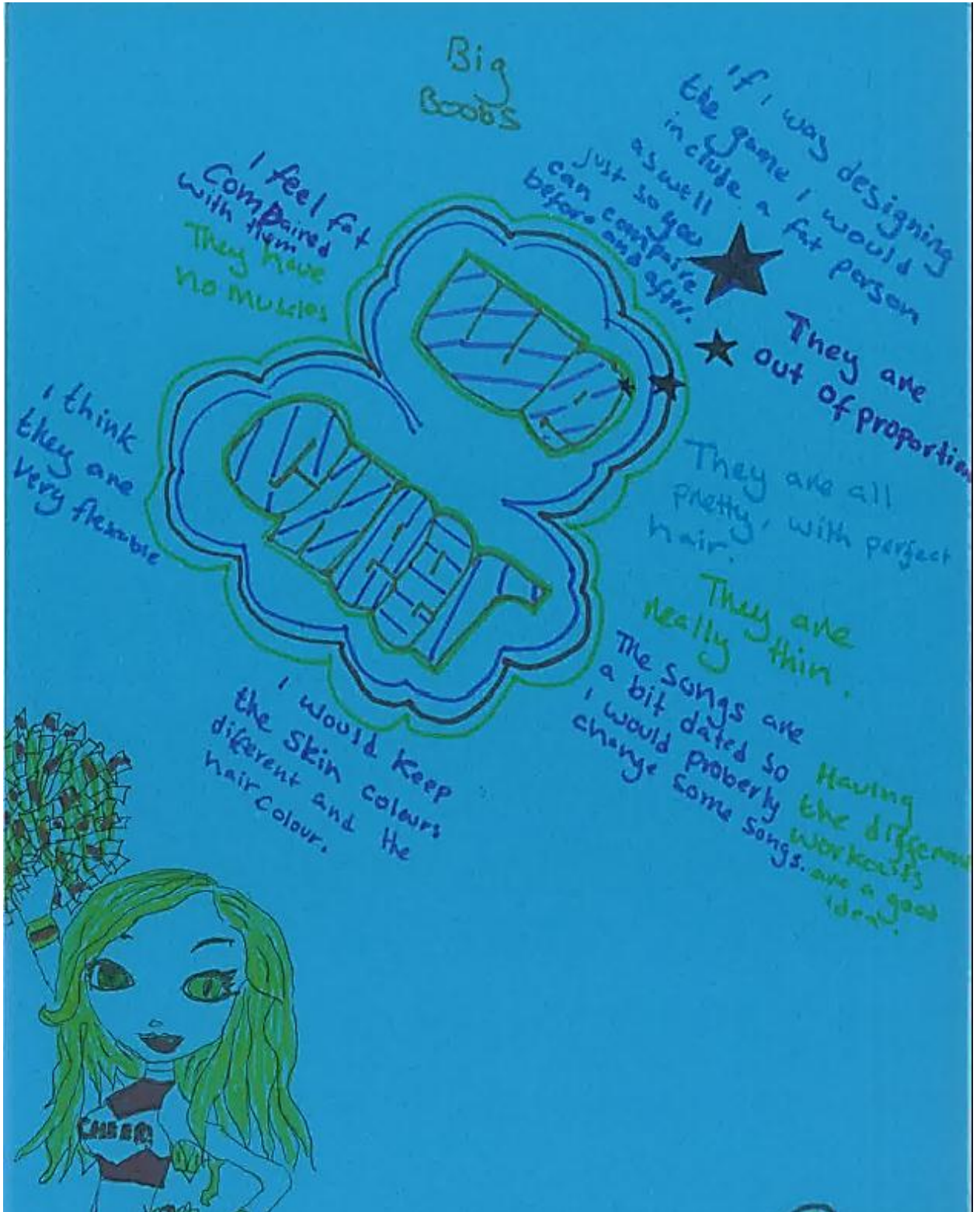


FAT!!

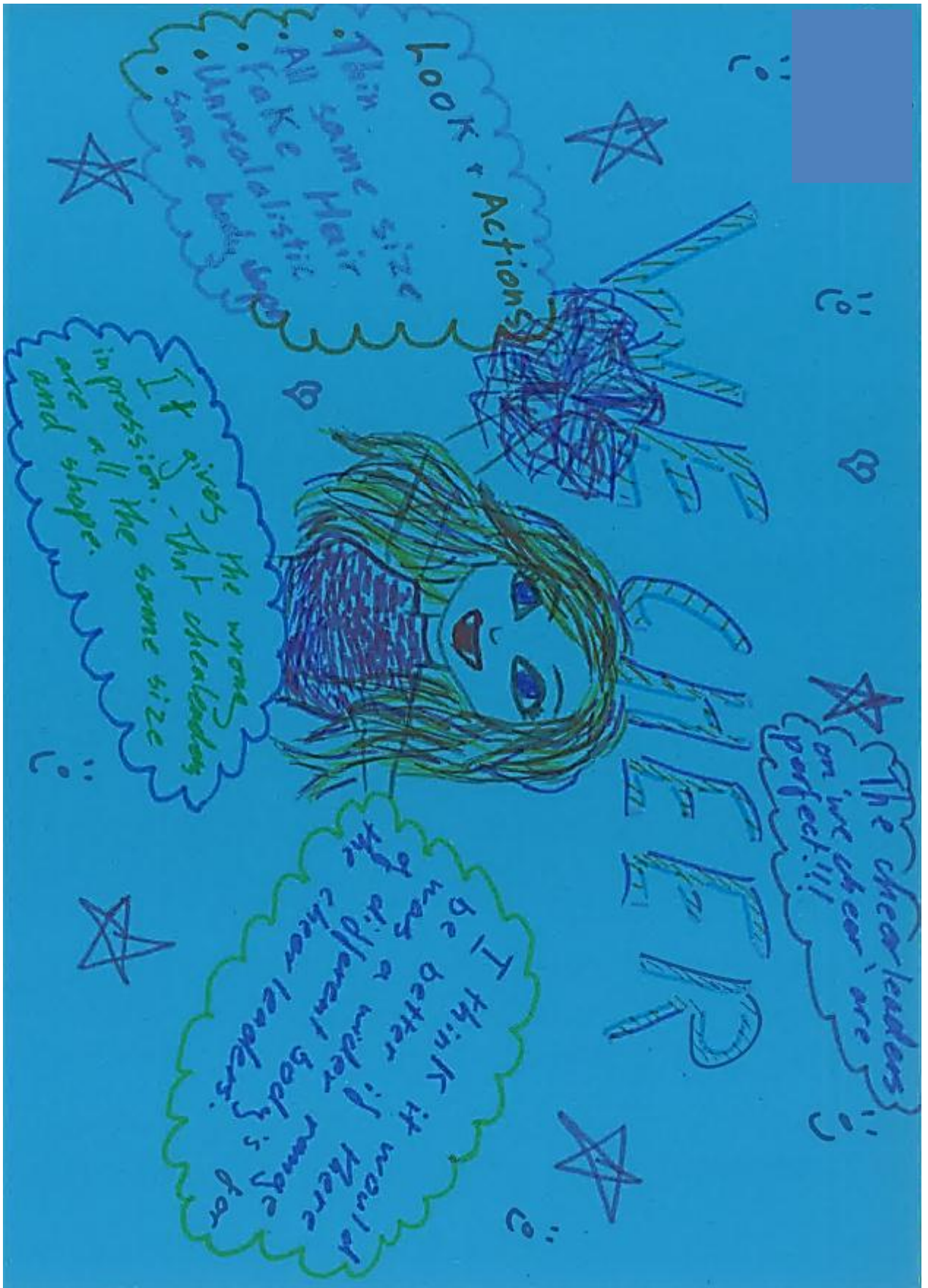
- Short and stumpy legs - thighs touch at the top
- Big tummy
- No shape.
- No neck
- No boobs - they blend into her stomach!
- fat face
- She looks like a fish (her face)

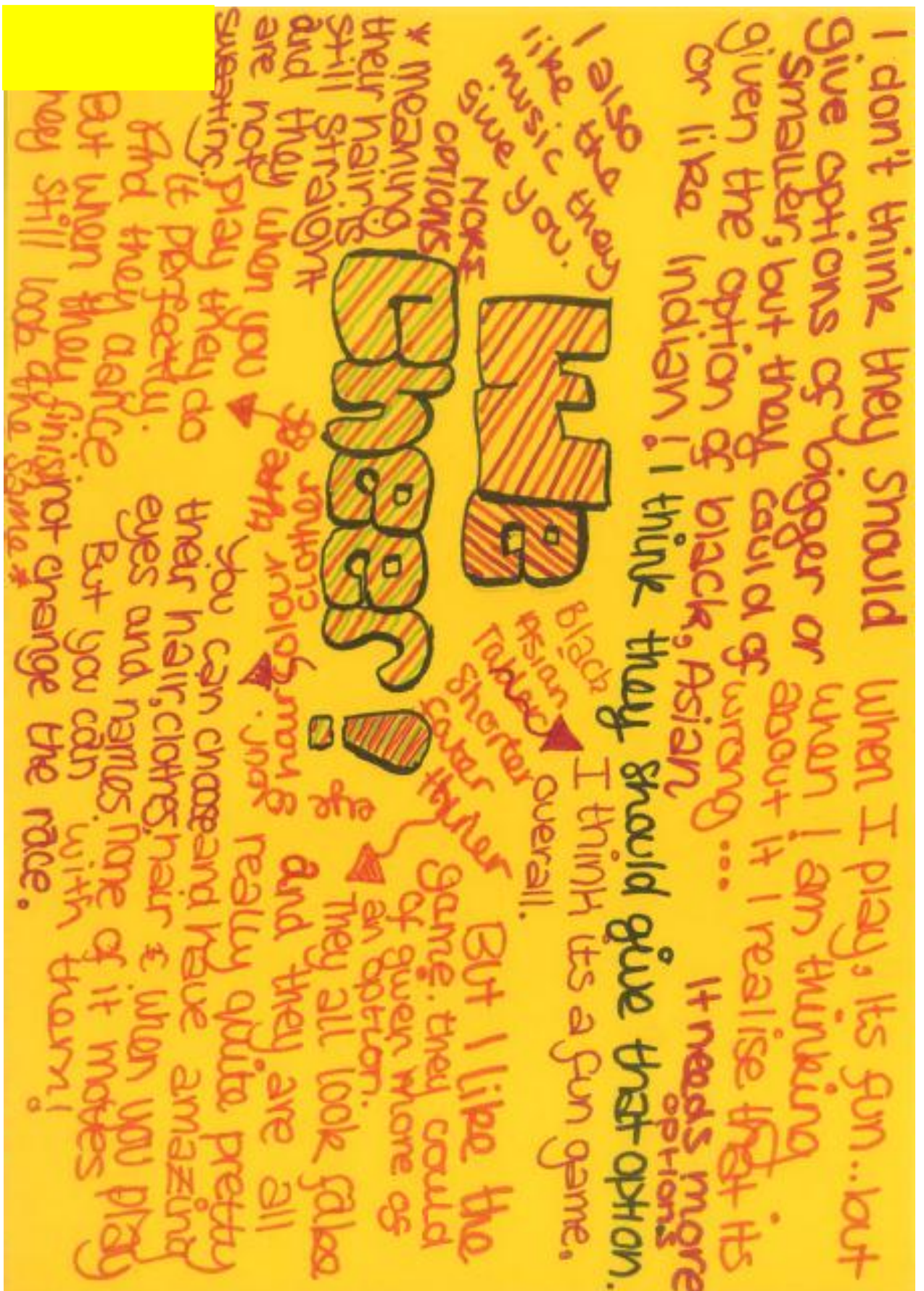
APPENDIX TWO

Appendix Two: Example “We Cheer” Critique Posters



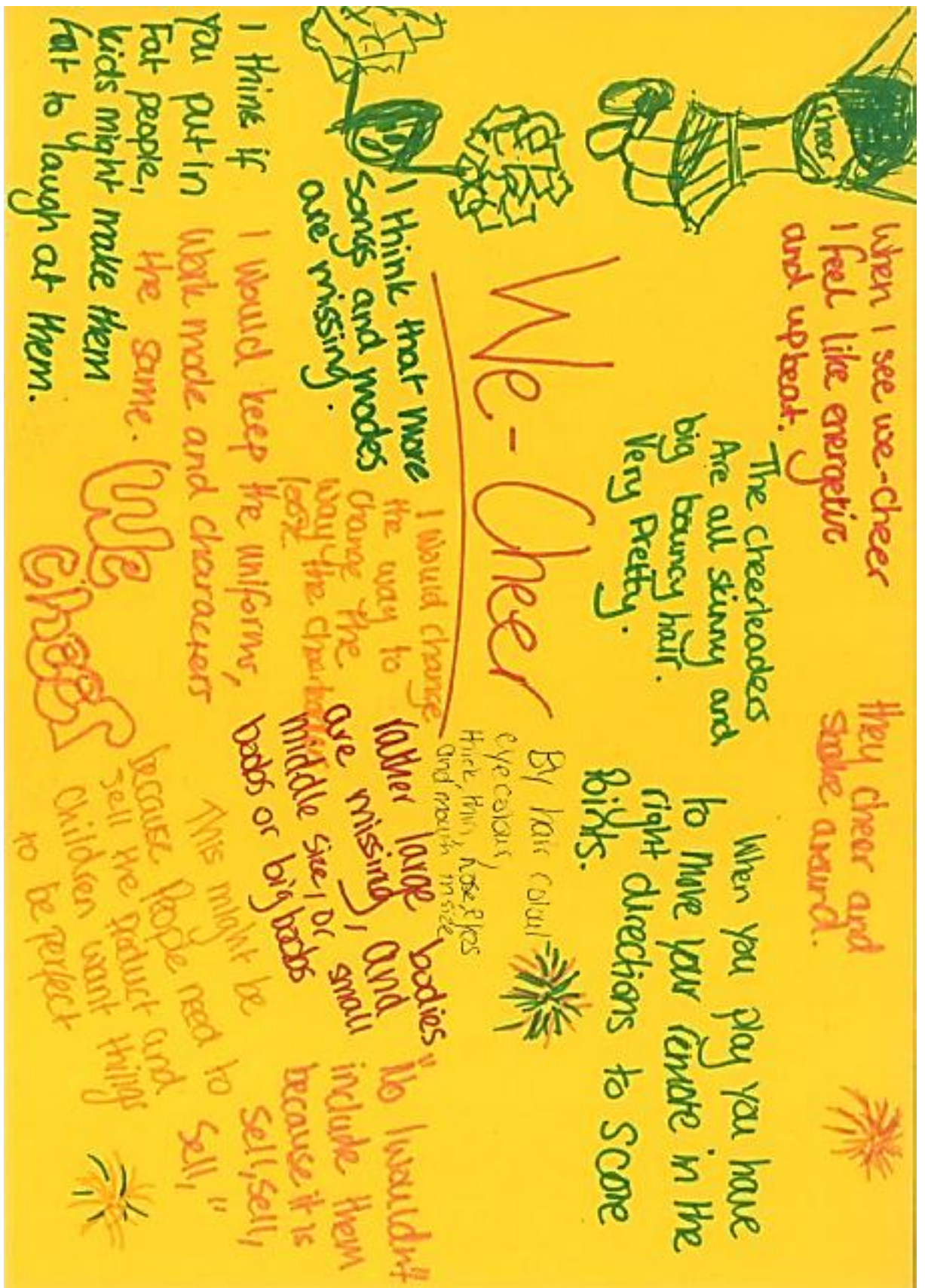
Appendix Two: Example “We Cheer” Posters





Appendix Two: Example “We Cheer” Posters





APPENDIX THREE

Appendix Three: Examples of Active Woman Narratives

The girl is playing tennis and she is at the playground. She is thinking about winning her match! She is wearing a tight tennis skirt and a tight top! They are both white. She is happy because she is winning and she is with her friends! She looks good at tennis and she is quite ~~at~~ and ~~she has~~ Skunk and she looks very delicate.

Appendix Three: Examples of Active Woman Narratives

She is in America on the beach surfing. She is thinking that there is a really hot boy surfing. She is wearing a bright pink bikini. She is blonde tall and thin and got a really nice tan line. She feeling really relaxed and what she's going wear for the beach party tonight. Her friend is coming round to get ready and to have a girly night before the party starts. She is about 21.

Appendix Three: Example Active Woman Narrative

was out jogging with her best friend Robin. They are wearing their everyday jogging clothes which make them look skinnier. After this jogging they would work out with some weights and sit ups, to make their stomach muscles stronger.

All she could think about though was how she was going to tell Tom that she no longer wanted to be with him. The real reason was that she was now dating Toby and couldn't manage two guys any longer.

Catherine was an average looking girl who idolised anyone who didn't cover their face in make-up or face tan. She hated the fact her face wasn't perfect but also hated games with skinny girls.

Appendix Three: Example Active Woman Narrative

Sophia was ~~is~~ 13 years old and she is already an olympic gymnast. This weekend she was going to Florida for the worlds. When she got there she went straight to training, she was knackered and so jet lagged. She got changed into her leotard, she was very self-conscious because boys were staring through the window. She had her blonde wavy, long hair tied up in a ponytail with an average size body. She kept making mistakes because of the hunky men watching. After she finished, she was sweating buckets. Then she met up with her friends and went for a walk she was happy and chatting and was wearing a comfy mini skirt and top. She eventually won the all-round event and was the best in the world she didn't care what anyone else thought anymore.

APPENDIX FOUR

Appendix Four: Example Personal Map



Appendix Four: Example Personal Map

I ♥ ...

Taylor Lautner
Dancing
Shopping
Justin Bieber
Chocolate

♥ friends!
x

PERSONAL MAP!

♥ laughing!

facebook

Our little sayings...

Ald-ge-bra! Score!
Strawberries! Trai Amac...
Seriously!
Man-chest-air!
Cool Beans


♥

I live in with my 2 sisters 1 brother and my parents

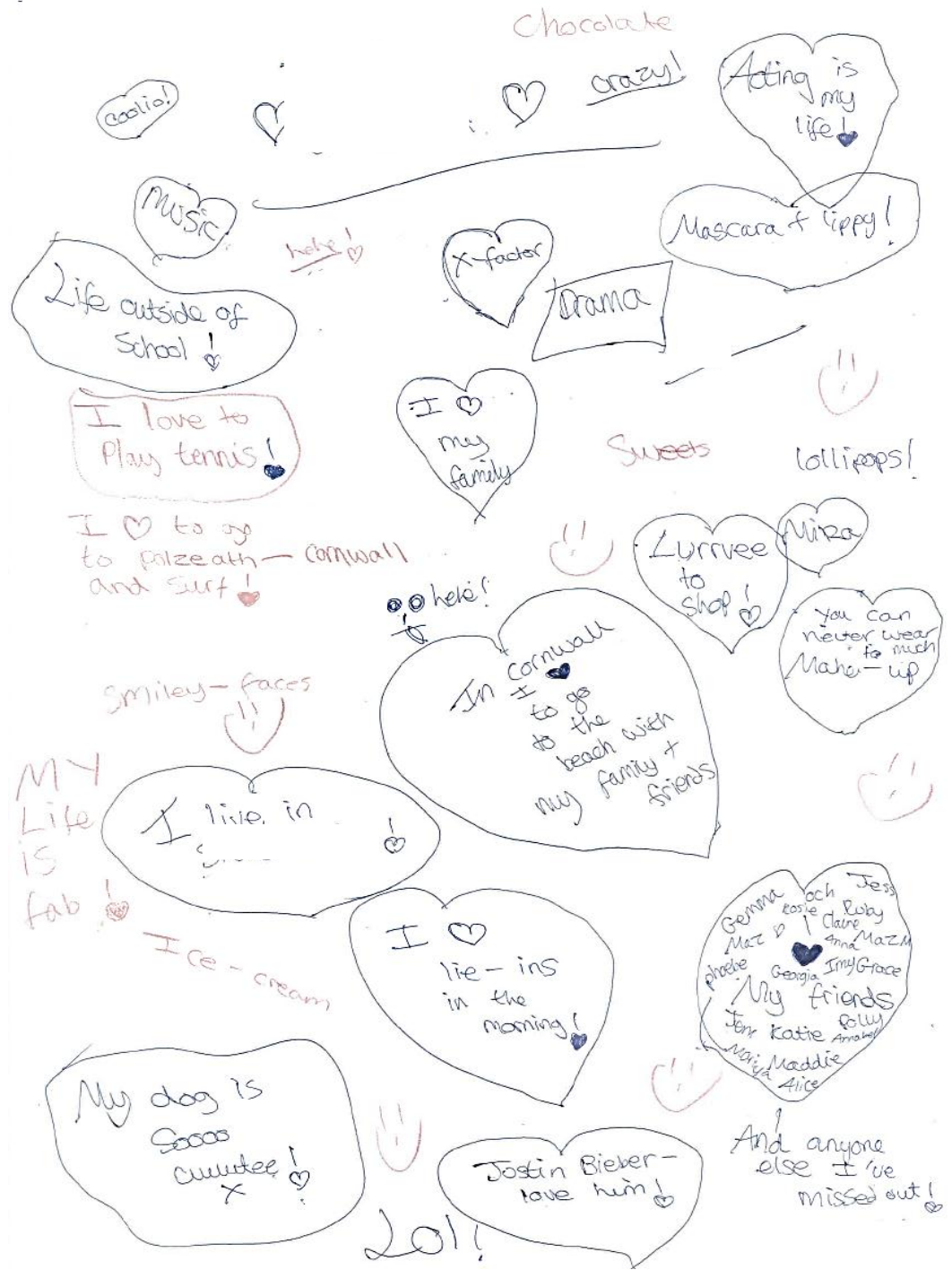
my room is round the back

I feel most comfortable in my bedroom in my house

RAVE!



Appendix Four: Example Personal Map



APPENDIX FIVE

Research Protocol: Dates and Activities

Research Approach- Focus Groups/Collaborative Workshops

Project Length- 1 school term (meeting for 1-2 hours on a weekly basis)

Participants- 20 females between 12 and 13 years old.

Meetings with the school staff and parents took place before the study commenced.

Workshop 1 (29th April 2010) 'Getting to Know Each Other'

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 1

20 x sheets of A3 plain paper
40 x lined (revision) cards ½ for personal biography & ½ for freewriting
Pack of coloured pencils
Laptop & Microphone.

- Project introduction
- Quick get to know each other activity
- Personal disclosure: tell the girls about me, my interests etc. Have my own personal map ready to show and talk through with them (this is a good way to introduce the task as well).
- Task 1 **Personal Biography** (an opportunity for the girls to self define rather than me ascribing them a demographic brushstroke):

TASK CARD- On the piece of card in front of you I would like you to write your own personal biography- that is tell me all the things that you think it is important for me to know about you. For example, your name, age, a description of yourself. Information about your family, do you have brothers and sisters? Are they younger or older? Where is your family home etc? What do you like to do when you are not at school? What things do you not enjoy doing? What are your hobbies/interests? What are your favourite things to do in school? Favourite subjects? Favourite co-curricular clubs? What is your favourite physical activity? What makes you smile? What makes you feel sad?

- Task 2 **Personal Map:**

TASK CARD- On a piece of A3 paper I would like you to draw a personal map detailing where you spend most of your time, what you do there, who you are with, how you feel when you are there. Try and be as specific as you can and include anything that you feel is important in your life. Don't forget to put your name at the top of the paper.

- Task 3 **Freewriting:**

TASK CARD- When I say a theme and statement I would like you to write down on the piece of card in front of you the first thing that comes into your mind. Do not hesitate just write it down- there is no right or wrong answer. Don't forget to put your name at the top of the card.

Theme 1 = **Physical Activity**

Questions

- (1) When I am active I feel . . .
- (2) When I am inactive I feel . . .

Theme 2 = **The Body**

Questions

- (1) When I am active my body is . . .
- (2) I notice my body most when . . .
- (3) Sometimes I wish my body . . .

Workshop 2 (6th May 2010) Girls Playing Games Observation: Introducing “We Cheer”

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 2

Nintendo Wii Console & “We Cheer” game
Laptop & Microphone
20 x A4 lined paper

- Let the girls play “We Cheer”- Split the group into two groups of 10:

1st Group (Active)- Each girl has the opportunity to play the “We Cheer”, orientating themselves with the game and the players. The other girls in the group are watching, commenting on the game, particularly the things they notice, the things they like about it, is there anything they don't like?

2nd Group (Active Women Narrative Task)

TASK CARD- I would like you to write a story about a girl your age that is playing sport/ being active. Think about what she might be doing, where she is? What would she/ should she be thinking about?

- Swap groups over after a time and each group will do the new task.
-

Workshop 3 (13th May 2010) ‘We Cheer, We Play’: Squad Makeovers & Workout Modes

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 3

Nintendo Wii and “We Cheer” game
20 pieces of lined card
20 pens
20 Body Image and Media information sheets to be completed
Laptop & Microphone

- Group split into two (same as last week in the end)

1st Group (Active) watched and played the “We Cheer” squad makeover and workout mode specifically whilst some girls played others commented and wrote down their observations:

OBSERVATION TASK:- I asked the group to write down the things that they noticed and that interested them about the ‘Squad Makeover’ and ‘Workout’ modes in ‘We Cheer.’

Each girl was given a piece of lined card with the following prompts:

What I notice about the ‘squad makeover’ is . . .

What I notice about the workout mode is . . .

2nd Group had their lunch, chatted and completed the information sheet I provided. The questions were:

NAME:

AGE:

DATE OF BIRTH:

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

WHAT NAME WOULD YOU LIKE TO

APPEAR ON THE BLOG?

DO YOU READ MAGAZINES?

WHAT MAGAZINES DO YOU READ?

DO YOU WATCH TELEVISION?

WHICH TV PROGRAMMES DO YOU WATCH?

DO YOU WATCH FILMS?

WHICH FILMS DO YOU WATCH?

WHAT MUSIC DO YOU LISTEN TO?

DO YOU HAVE A Wii OR ANY OTHER COMPUTER CONSOLE?

WHICH GAMES DO YOU PLAY?

WHAT DO YOU DO AT THE WEEKENDS?

WHEN YOU ARE WITH YOUR FRIENDS WHAT

DO YOU LIKE TO DO?

- Introduce the next 3 weeks themes of **Critique, Collaboration, Group work** to produce group understanding. End Product = Group presentation of ideas: through posters.
- Introduce Online Google Blogger Journals. I would like the girls to utilise these online forums as personal diaries- I particularly would like the girls to write about the times they notice their body’s, where they are and what they are doing. How this makes them feel- positive or negative? Explain why.
- FIND OUT WHICH MAGAZINES THE GIRLS READ

Workshop 4 (20th May 2010) 'Normative Magazine Discourse'

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 4

Magazines: Hello, OK, Shout, Sugar, Heat, Look, Bliss, Mizz, New, Top of the Pops, Now.

Images from Game Face (see appendix one)

Glue

Scissors

A4 plain paper

Pens

Laptop & Microphone

Format: All the tables in the room were arranged into one big one so that everyone was sat around together. No group segregation.

- **Task 1 Magazine exploration:**

TASK CARD- Look through the selection of magazines I have provided. Pick out images that particularly interest you and cut them out. From this collection pick the one image that you think represents the ideal female body.

I want you to stick this image onto a piece of A4 paper and write around it why you chose it.

- **Task 2 Sporting bodies:**

TASK CARD- I would like you to pick one image that is in front of you. This time stick it onto a piece of A4 paper and compare this body with the one that you chose from the magazine.

Write in the space around the image

- *CRITICAL CORPOREAL CLOSURE:* Let's pick one image that we think is representative of The Woman, The Girl throughout the media (print, tv, games). What does she represent, what key features does she have? Then let's talk about who this is attractive to: move discussion on to an implied heterosexuality and being attractive to satisfy men/boys. Link this to 'manly' stereotypes of women who play sports.

22nd May 2010 Parents Focus Group

**Workshop 5 (25th May 2010) Work Out Modes, Reality TV, Advice Columns & the
'Classed' Female.**

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 5

Laptop or computer with internet access
Microphone
Collection of clips from Reality TV shows
Advice columns/pages from magazines.
A4 Plain Paper
Pens and colouring pencils

Format: All tables arranged as one big table as this seemed to facilitate the discussion.

- I wanted to pick up on some key issues from last week's session where we compared and talked about how some sporting bodies compare with images of the female body we see in magazines. I asked some more questions:

Can you remember what you thought when I showed you the images? (let them discuss)

Why do you think that/feel like that?

What features did you notice especially?

What do you feel when you play sport/are active?

Do you consider how you look?

How would you like to look/think you look when you are playing sport?

In terms of the ideal body, a lot of you last week talked about clothing being important. In terms of sport is clothing/kit important?

What would you like to wear?

Some of you mentioned you don't like the shorts you currently have to wear? Why?

What is wrong with them? What would you rather?

- **Task 1: (New Focus) Class & Femininity**

I began by asking:

If I was to say to you social class, what do I mean?

What is the difference between different classes?

Could you describe the working class? Middle Class? Upper Class?

TASK CARD- On the piece of paper in front of you I would like you to draw a picture of a working class girl. Think about what she might look like, be wearing. Around it I would like you to label the things that make her working class. Also I would like you to think about what this girl might be thinking about, what might her interests be? What does she like to do at the weekend etc etc.

- Task 2

TASK CARD- On this piece of paper I would like you to compare this girl to yourself or a middle class girl. What would the main difference be?

- **CRITICAL CORPOREAL CLOSURE:** Last week we talked about markers of femininity in terms of girls and women using make up, clothing and hair styles to make themselves more attractive to boys and everyone. This week I want you to think about how a girl can be marked as being part of one social class or another.

POWERPOINT SLIDES: THESE TWO CLIPS SHOW WHAT ARE STEREOTYPICALLY HELD VIEWS ABOUT FEMALES FROM DIFFERENT CLASSES, IN THIS CASE THE WORKING CLASSES:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDOpVA5vQ8I> (VICKI POLLARD)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6e8o9eeflY> (LAUREN)

These girls are often talked about as being out of control and in need of help. In our modern world the ways of ‘helping’ these girls is often through the use of reality television programmes that teach girls how to become ‘proper’ ideal females:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4T9Upvi8B7I> (LADETTTE TO LADY)

So girls now are always being told how they have to improve themselves, and the problem with this is that the ideal or ‘proper’ girl we are trying to create is focused on one type, one model. So she is well behaved, well mannered, well dressed etc etc

The girl is also informed about how to improve their body through work out modes such as the one on “We Cheer” and also, through advice columns and pages in magazines.

(REFER TO WORK OUT IMAGES ON POWERPOINT AT THIS POINT)

Taking the magazines as an example, in the advice columns the ways to make yourself normal or overcome your problems is often to buy something. So in the Shout and Sugar magazines I brought along last girls are advised to buy padded bras, in Bliss the advice was to use foundation, wear a polo neck or pretty scarf, Mizz advises a reader to eat good nutritious healthy food (more expensive), and to use mouthwash and floss when brushing teeth. Sugar tells us that dying the greys might be an answer.

ESSENTIALLY YOU HAVE TO HAVE THE FINANCE AND THE TIME TO DO THESE THINGS AND BUY THE PRODUCTS THEY SUGGEST AND/OR ARE ADVERTISED IN THE MAGAZINES. SOME PEOPLE SIMPLY CAN’T AFFORD TO.

THOSE GIRLS WHO DON’T FIT THESE NORMAL OR HEALTHY BODY IMAGES WHETHER IT IS THROUGH THEIR CLOTHING, HAIRSTYLES, BODY SHAPE, BEHAVIOUR ETC ARE LAUGHED AT AND HUMILIATED SUCH AS VICKI POLLARD AND LAUREN IN THE CLIPS SHOW EARLIER.

Workshop 6 (14th June 2010) Organisation and ‘Catch Up’ workshop

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 5

Laptop & Microphone
Nintendo Wii & “We Cheer”

This was a busy week for the girls and they had games after lunch so I decided to use this workshop to ensure that they were all still enjoying themselves and understood that they were part of a research project etc.

We talked about the blogger sites and their use of them and ‘sorted’ or attended to any problems that were arising.

The girls also split themselves into three focus groups and I arranged convenient times to meet with each.

Some girls stayed on to play “We Cheer”

Workshop 7 (16th June 2010) Race & Femininity

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 7

Nintendo Wii
Images of Serena Williams (racialised sporting body), Sania Mirza (racialised sporting body), the “We Cheer” cheerleaders (racialised popular computerised body), Shakira (racialised celebrity body), Monique Coleman (racialised celebrity body) and Jenna Ushkowitz (racialised celebrity body) see figure 24 in main body of the thesis.
20 Pieces of Lined card
Pens

Format: I arranged the girls into 5 groups of 4 individuals. Each group was sat at a table and the fifth group was playing “We Cheer.”

- Each group had a different set of images on an A4 piece of paper in front of them (except group 5 who were playing “We Cheer”. The images were:
 - (1) Serena Williams in her ‘catsuit’ attire at the US open (racialized sporting body)
 - (2) Sania Mirza an Indian tennis player (racialized sporting body)
 - (3) The “We Cheer” cheerleaders (racialized ‘popular’ body computerized)
 - (4) Shakira, Monique Coleman (High School Musical), Jenna Ushkowitz (Glee) (racialized celebrity body).
- Tasks:

TASK CARD- LOOK AT THE IMAGES ON THE TABLE IN FRONT OF YOU. AS A GROUP I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DECIDE ON 10 WORDS THAT YOU WOULD ASSOCIATE WITH THIS IMAGE. WHICH 10 WORDS COME TO MIND?

Each group had 10 minutes to do the task and then I swapped the pictures around. At the same time the groups took it in turns to play “We Cheer.”

- **CRITICAL CORPOREAL CLOSURE:** This took the form of a general group discussion. Based on the girls’ general focus on body shape and the female figure over matters of race, I led much of this discussion and problematised some of the assumptions I observed during the workshop. This session raised questions for me about how I conduct research into racial inequality from a position of privilege and with a group of girls who are not racially diverse. I began to think during this closing session of the way I can return to race during the focus groups.

25th, 28th & 29th June 2010: Focus Groups

Workshop 8 (1st July 2010) Poster Preparation

Equipment/Resources for Workshop 8
A4 coloured Card
Coloured pencils & pens
“We Cheer” ‘sparks’ e.g. game case, information, pictures etc etc

Format: All the tables were arranged so as to create one big working space.

- Task 1

TASK CARD- Based on our discussion over the last weeks I would like you to produce a poster. The poster will show the important things you think about when playing or watching others play “We Cheer.” Basically I would like you to tell me:

(1) What the cheerleaders look like, what they do, what you do when you play, how you feel.

Then, I would like you to show what is missing from “We Cheer:” which bodies are missing? Why might this be? Why/would you include them if you were designing the game? What parts of the game would you keep the same? What would you change? Why?

- Task 2

I asked the girls to use the posters they had produced during the session to write me a short report on “We Cheer.” I gave them my e-mail address and asked them to send their work to me during their summer holiday.