

Perspectives on Children and Young People

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Learning Bodies

The Body in Youth and Childhood Studies

 Springer

Perspectives on Children and Young People

Volume 2

Series editors

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This series builds on the Springer Handbook on Childhood and Youth, and on the widespread interest in current issues that pertain to young people and children. The series contributes to the field of youth studies, which encompasses the disciplines of sociology, psychology, education, health, economics, social geography and cultural studies. Within these fields, there is a need to address two distinctive elements in relation to children and youth. The first of these is social change, and in particular, the risks and opportunities that are emerging in relation to the global changes to young people's lives captured by the metaphor 'the Asian Century'. The second of these is the emerging interest in building on the traditions of 'northern' theorists, where the traditions of the field of youth studies lie, through an engagement with new conceptual approaches that draw on the global south. These two elements frame the Handbook on Childhood and Youth, and in so doing, set the scene for a deeper engagement with key topics and issues through a book series.

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Learning Bodies

The Body in Youth and Childhood Studies

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Preface

‘Learning Bodies’ addresses the gap in attention to the body in youth studies. Whilst a significant range of work in youth studies has explored gender, class, race and ethnicity, and sexualities—all of which have bodily dimensions—the body is generally studied indirectly, rather than being the central focus. This edited collection draws together a scholarly range of international, interdisciplinary work on youth, with a specific focus on the body. The authors engage with conceptual, empirical and pedagogical possibilities which interrupt perspectives which view young people’s bodies primarily as ‘problems’ to be managed, or as sites of risk or deviance. They demonstrate that a focus on the body enables exploration of additional dimensions in understanding the experiences of young people. They variously situate their discussion across a range of sites in Australia, North America, Britain, Canada, Asia and Africa, drawing from a range of disciplines including sociology, education and cultural studies. This collection aims to show—theoretically, empirically and pedagogically—the implications that emerge from a reframed approach to understanding children and youth through a focus on the body and embodiment.

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Introduction: The Body in Youth and Childhood Studies

Julia Coffey, Shelley Budgeon and Helen Cahill

Abstract ‘Learning Bodies’ addresses the gap in attention to the body in youth studies. Whilst a significant range of work in youth studies has explored gender, class, race and ethnicity and sexualities—all of which have bodily dimensions—the body is generally studied indirectly, rather than being the central focus. This edited collection draws together a scholarly range of international, interdisciplinary work on youth, with a specific focus on the body. The authors engage with conceptual, empirical and pedagogical possibilities which interrupt perspectives which view young people’s bodies primarily as ‘problems’ to be managed, or as sites of risk or deviance. They demonstrate that a focus on the body enables exploration of additional dimensions in understanding the experiences of young people. They variously situate their discussion across a range of sites in Australia, North America, Britain, Canada, Asia and Africa; drawing from a range of disciplines including sociology, education and cultural studies. This collection aims to show—theoretically, empirically and pedagogically—the implications that emerge from a reframed approach to understanding children and youth through a focus on the body and embodiment.

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The Young Body in Context

Youth and childhood are key areas of social inquiry, and more recently this interest is linked specifically to the body. Key areas of research in scholarly work on young bodies include the sexualised body, the disabled body, the obese body and the moving body (Brembeck 2013). Research on the intersections between the body and gender in youth and childhood are also a particularly strong focus in the field (Frost 2001; Kehily 2001; Budgeon 2003; Frost 2003; Warren 2003; Heywood 2007; Nayak and Kehily 2008; Jackson 2015; Kehily 2015). An array of work has also explored the young body in relation to sexualities (Allen 2008; Renold and Ringrose 2011; Graham and Mphaphuli 2015), race and racism (Unterhalter et al. 2004; Connolly 2008; Marinova 2013), ethnicity (Nayak 2003; Everett 2008; Nayak and Kehily 2014), class (Skeggs 1997; O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000; Reay 2001; Nayak and Kehily 2014), disability (Priestly 1998; Gibson et al. 2013) and place (Kenway et al. 2006; Farrugia et al. 2015); and the intersections between these categories in young people's and children's lived experiences. As Coffey and Watson (2015) have argued, following this range of work in children and youth studies, it is more productive to study gender as it intersects with other dimensions of embodiment such as class, poverty, race, ethnicity and the invisibility of whiteness, disability, sexuality, consumption and place.

The chapters in this collection seek to complicate some of the most pervasive mainstream assumptions made about young people, within which young people are positioned as naïve, reckless and a 'risk' to themselves and society. Typically, in this discourse, the body is seen as the site of risk.

The work in this volume interrogates risk discourses of youth, and interrupts the 'mind'-centric approaches to youth in developmental psycho-social approaches. The arguments challenge those biological explanations of youth which neglect the embodied and socio-cultural dimensions of young people's lives. Theory is used to question how the body has been conceptualised and researched. Explicit empirical studies are used to discuss issues relating to sexualities and gender, and health and wellbeing and learning.

Risk Discourses of Youth and Childhood

This book makes a timely contribution to discussing the way in which an 'at risk' discourse frames public discussions of youth and children. In recent youth studies literature, concerns are expressed about reliance on the overly linear 'transitions' metaphor to understand young people's progression from education to employment (Wyn and Woodman 2006), or the resilience metaphor to discuss the need to survive a range of physical, social and bodily 'risks'. Societal concerns are raised about those youth whose trajectories do not follow normative or linear pathways, as if the breakdown in 'successful' transition to adulthood is a moral failure upon the part of

individual youth. Political and public health concerns related to the failure of young people to successfully transition out of education into employment intertwine to weave together moral concerns about 'idleness', and health concerns about mental illness, substance use, crime and delinquency, teenage pregnancy and, more recently, sexting (Kelly 2001; Harris 2004; Riele 2006; Albury and Crawford 2012).

From a sociological perspective, it has been argued that the 'youth at risk' discourses should be re-read within the broader context of the 'risk society' described by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991). Beck (1992) theorises that the broad economic and social shifts that have occurred in late modern societies such as Europe, the USA and Australia have led to a situation where individuals are compelled to be responsible for creating their own trajectories and biographies. This context is vastly different from previous generations who followed relatively stable patterns of work and family (Beck 1992). As youth studies scholars have argued, following Beck's work, the individual management of structural risks is a central feature of contemporary society. There is a pernicious underside to the 'risk society', in that the individual is expected to be able to 'manage' risk, regardless of structural or institutional inequalities. The most ironic, or perhaps most tragic aspect however is that although the 'relations of inequality' including class and gender have remained more or less the same, structural risks related to these inequalities are recast as individual risks. Those who fail to manage these risks thus bear the full psychological and material weight of consequences, often without recognition of the way in which structural inequities are at play in their lives. As the chapters in this book discuss, many of the key risks which young people are presumed to be susceptible to relate to their bodies. The discourse of bodily risk is particularly relevant in contemporary discussions of sex, sexualisation and sexuality relating to childhood (Brownlie 2001; Myers 2009; Egan and Hawkes 2010; Egan 2012; Renold et al. 2015). Media risk discourses concerning imaging of the young body through 'sexting' and circulation of sexual images in digital communication are particularly dominant current themes of concern surrounding youth (Ringrose 2011; Albury and Crawford 2012; Dobson 2013; Ringrose et al. 2013; Ringrose and Harvey 2015). These one-dimensional constructions of young people's bodies as risky and 'at risk' has been challenged by a range of researchers in youth and childhood studies (Hörschelmann and Colls 2010).

Beyond Psychosocial Development Discourses of Youth and Childhood

Alongside 'at risk' frameworks, psychosocial frameworks of development are a second dominant approach informing understandings of young people and children. Developmental markers and health status work to separate 'normal' youth from those deemed as needing intervention. Typically, the successful completion of normative developmental objectives in health and risk are a key focus in youth health policy. As many youth studies scholars have pointed out however, this

approach fails to appreciate the complex interactions of factors related to class, gender, race, ethnicity and ability (Wyn and Woodman 2006). The emphasis placed on health and meeting normative goals also reveals anxiety about particular dangers young bodies pose to society in the present and in future adulthood (James and Hockey 2007). In countries such as Australia, the UK and USA this has centred around so-called lifestyle (and by implication preventable) health issues such as obesity, mental illness, eating disorders, and alcohol (particularly binge drinking) and other drug use. As Kelly (2001) has argued, the ‘youth at-risk’ discourse, drawn primarily from developmental psychological approaches, potentially encompasses all youthful behaviours and dispositions and thus places all young people as ‘at risk’.

The way in which young people are conceptualised informs the very design of the health, education and research programs constructed to serve their needs (Cahill 2015). Where transition and risk metaphors dominate, interventions tend to be remedial or therapeutic in nature, further positioning young people as recipients, victims, threats, or as those with an impending potential for ‘saviour-hood’. Where constructs of immanence are applied, the not-yet-fully-adult is held to be still in a process of becoming, which will be completed on attaining adulthood. Whilst still in this state of becoming the child or young person is not conceptualised as fully citizen, and hence tend to be excluded from decisions about matters that affect them.

Discourses of adolescent brain development have more recently flourished in discussions of youth. Kelly (2014) argues that the discussion of not-yet-fully-formed-brains is reductive and creates a very limited and limiting understanding of young people’s lives, essentially conflating all of the complexity of experience and consciousness to just ‘one organ in the body’. This has the significant consequence of ‘stripping young people of their bodies, gender, histories and contexts’ (Kelly 2014). However, as the articles in this collection demonstrate, a re-theorised focus on the body can provide a frame through which to critique reductive understandings of youth, and to pursue understandings which embrace the complexity and ambivalence that Kelly argues should inform youth studies.

Corporeal theories aim to place the body—and embodied experience—at the forefront of analysis, highlighting the active relations between bodies and the world. A focus on the body’s potential and lived experience can interrupt work previous approaches in which the body was either rendered invisible or held the inferior with a mind-body binary logic. Thinking ‘through’ the body can open up ways of exploring how the body is implicated in the complexities and tensions in young people’s lives.

Theoretical Background: Beyond the ‘Absent Body’

Shilling (2012) contends that the body has been an ‘absent presence’ in much of classical sociology. By this he means that although the body and human physicality is implicitly part of almost all sociological study (for example, in relation to identity,

governance, power, social action), the body tends to be seen as extraneous to these processes and is regarded as a lesser concern. This relegation of the body is rooted in dominant Western philosophy, particularly the work of Descartes, in which the mind/body is constituted as a core dualism. Feminist philosophers have been highly critical of the impact of the mind/body dualism and its role in sustaining philosophical inequalities between men and women. They have argued that men and masculinity have been associated with the mind, reason, logic and order; whilst women and femininity have been associated with the body and the passions, irrationality and disorder (Grosz 1994). Finding ways to re-theorise bodies beyond dualisms has been a central tenet of much post-structural feminist work, and has also contributed to recent empirical sociological approaches to the body (Budgeon 2003; Coleman 2009; Fox 2012). This concern with bridging the mind/body binary has led to efforts to rethink key aspects of social theory, including the relations between people and social structures and processes and with how individuals negotiate 'structure' and 'agency' (Rose 1996; Ringrose 2013; Coffey and Farrugia 2014).

Disability studies scholars and curriculum theorists have drawn scholarly attention to the body through developing theoretical approaches (Colligan 2001; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson 2005; Hickey Moody 2009) and through conduct of 'embodied' empirical studies with youth and children (Tronvoll 1994; Priestly 1998; Heydon 2005; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson 2005; Hickey Moody 2009; Matthews 2009; Asbjørnslett et al. 2012; Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2012). This literature has for example extended the work of race and gender theorists to argue that disability is not an 'essential property of bodies', but rather can be more productively understood as a system of representation by which bodies are marked as inferior (Rosemarie Garland-Thomson 2005). Garland-Thompson argues that, like the social categories of "people of color" or "queer," the term "disabled" also encompasses a wide range of variance in physical characteristics, identities and experiences, though these terms can risk flattening these differences (Rosemarie Garland-Thomson 2005).

Researchers concerned with the study of the body have sought to reorient our understanding of the role played by the corporeal within social processes and sets of relations. This has involved embracing non-essentialist and non-foundational frameworks which encourage researchers to engage more fully with the body as irreducibly social. Developments in theorising the body have notably followed on from an increased interest in conceptualising the social as a set of ongoing processes characterised by movement and indeterminacy. Thus researchers have become interested in utilising concepts that invite thinking about the social in terms of fluidity and becoming, rather than, constancy and being. These re-conceptualisations of the social have resonated with many researchers working in the area of youth studies. As Nayak and Kehily (2008, p. 6) state, 'For young people the phrase, "coming-into-being" is especially apt as they undergo a great deal of physical, cultural and emotional change'. The argument is made that we must move beyond constructing bodies as 'docile, passive conduits for action' or as the biological material upon which culture is imprinted. With the influence of poststructuralism and new materialisms the body in youth studies has become an important site for

challenging a separation of culture and nature and understanding embodiment as both object and subject, representation and materiality.

In the study of young people's lives the body has often been recognised as crucial in the process and performance of identity work practices. For example many researchers have focused on the role of style and appearance play as part of youth transitions and subcultures, yet, this corpus of work, it is suggested, has 'failed to unpack in any systematic way how different bodily processes are implicated in young people's lives' (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, p. 108). Former approaches tended to comprehend the body as an object upon which the socio-cultural is imprinted. The body was perceived as the raw material which came to bear the marks of systems of signification once worked upon by human agents. Building on the themes of structure, constraint, and normalisation which have been emphasised by some researchers, and on the work of others who focus more on agency, resistance and transformation, recent developments in youth studies research has begun to bridge these divides by engaging with the influence of poststructuralism and new materialism (Budgeon 2003; Hickey-Moody 2012; Coffey 2013). Instead of choosing a strategy delimited by binary constructions these approaches seek to capture the contradictions, ambivalence, and multiplicity associated with lived embodiment in ways that avoid simplistic reductionism where, for instance the body is seen as an effect of cultural images or practices (see for example Coleman 2009; Ringrose 2011; Renold and Ivinson 2014).

Current theorisations actively bring the body into the centre of analyses by beginning from an ontology which emphasises relationality. This position 'shifts from conceptions of objects and bodies as occupying distinct and delimited spaces, and instead sees human bodies and all other material, social and abstract entities as relational, having no ontological status or integrity other than that produced through their relationship to other similarly contingent and ephemeral bodies, things, and ideas' (Fox and Alldred 2015, p. 401). This means that the body is not merely an entity which is *acted upon* but is active in producing the social worlds inhabited by young people. Crucially these theoretical approaches, because they allow for indeterminacy, multiple interconnections and unintended effects, facilitate new ways of understanding young people's lives by challenging assumptions which often normatively frame youth as a period of linear transition which, if performed successfully, marks the achievement of 'normal' and healthy adulthood. Similarly approaches which frame the body in one dimensional ways, such as the tendency to reduce the body to a site of risk, are disrupted by thinking the body as having capacities to connect and form relations with other bodies and objects thus being engaged in ongoing social processes.

These theoretical developments are engaged with throughout the chapters in this collection and are activated in relation to the key themes of this book. Chapters are organised around the key themes of the collection which include gender and sexuality; health and wellbeing; and methodology and pedagogy.

Bodies, Genders and Sexualities

This section explores the performance and embodiment of gender and sexualities in youth and childhood. Gender is a central analytic focus in the study of childhood and youth. It often has an implied bodily dimension, as it tends to be understood to correspond with biological sex and sexuality in a binary sex/gender relationship, though this has been problematised by a range of scholarly work (Butler 1993; Grosz 1994). Instead, the dynamics of gender and sexuality can be understood as both existing beyond the sexed body in social and cultural discourses and but as also having a material presence in embodied dispositions, sensations and practices. Chapters in this section connect to discussions of gender, sexualities and the body in relation to young queer communities in Asia (Yue); the negotiation of gender and heteronormativity at school in Australia (Migdalek) and South Africa (Bhana). Contemporary popular culture, femininities and the ideals of bodily perfection are also explored in Jackson's chapter on girls' interactions with media images in New Zealand while Retallack et al. analyse feminine body ideals, postfeminism and young British girls' use of social media. Erni's chapter discusses the gendered and sexualised constructions of 'vernacular masculinities' in online youth chat forums in Hong Kong.

Audrey Yue's chapter, "Queer Youthscapes in Asia" focuses on a range of new practices enacted by young queer communities within the context of far reaching social change taking place in Asia. Rapid economic development, industrialisation and globalisation are currently transforming many Asian societies and it is argued that these changes, often conceptually framed as indicative of spatial-temporal 'progress', are experienced at the level of the body. Contra to constructions of social change as progressive and linear, practices of queer youth challenge the teleology of transitions, both economic and embodied, and offer sites of resistance to norms of neoliberal governance. Yue analyses the popular film genre of Chinese schoolgirl lesbian romance and the everyday performances of gender and sexuality by young masculine women (the tomboy, the boy-head and the nightclub butch) in order to highlight how queer practices provide trajectories for self-fashioning that challenge the traditional linear model of youth transitions, and in so doing, expose the normative politics of transitions and associated notions of 'progress'. It is argued that Asia's new regime of capital accumulation relies upon the 'energy, optimism and resilience of young people' and the 'embodied human capital' they represent yet their futures are at the same time increasingly uncertain. Rather than accept their positioning as neoliberal enterprising subjects, expected to individually mitigate against structural uncertainties, Yue's analysis insightfully uncovers the ways in which queer youth instead deploy the principles of self-enterprise to create spaces where non-normative gender and sexual identifications enable young people to become active agents of change and resisters of neoliberal governance. Moreover, her analysis illustrates that wider processes of neoliberal economic restructuring have unexpectedly created conditions in which new institutional forms

of the social and subcultural are able to emerge from below, thus offering a further challenge to a unidirectional discourse of youth transition.

In “Broad Minds, Narrow Possibilities: The Embodiment of Gender”, Jack Migdalek explores how embodied performances of gender and sexuality continue to be sites of surveillance and regulation despite popularised neoliberal discourse which suggests individuals have greater freedom of choice in conducting their performance of gender. Through the ethnographic study of a middle class, mixed-sex high school in inner city Melbourne, Australia, Migdalek examines students’ interpretations of a performance of masculine embodiment, presented through the medium of dance. Elements of the performance which transgressed normative codes of masculinity are analysed in order to understand how dominant discourses of patriarchy, heteronormativity and gendernormativity organise the embodiment of gender. While students publicly expressed commitment to the belief that individuals should not care about how others perceive them, these individualised perspectives were not sustained throughout the study as following the performance it was evident many felt uncomfortable with the transgressions they had witnessed. This uneasiness was also evident when students participated in a practical dance workshop designed to encourage them to explore the norms and assumptions underpinning the performance of gendered embodiment. The findings illustrate an interesting disjuncture between the belief the students expressed that individuals have the right to embody how they wish without being subject to judgement and their own limited capacity to actually ‘do’ embodied performances which did not fit with prescribed norms of gender. The chapter reveals how inequitable gender conventions which order masculinity and femininity are negotiated by the young people and are reproduced as the normative boundaries set by dominant norms inhibit experimentation, prohibit the expansion of gender norms and ultimately exclude those bodies which do not, or cannot, conform. Drawing upon the principles of critical literacy a case is made for using practical performance-arts based experiences within school settings in order to generate experiences which challenge gender norms and encourage reflection upon inequitable gender codes beyond the cognitive level to a more embodied knowing which disrupts the taken for granted practice of gender.

Deevia Bhana’s chapter, “Steeling the Junior Body: Learning sport and masculinities in early years” draws upon an empirical study of young boys as they learn masculinity through specific forms of embodiment in the early years of schooling. This study, set in South Africa, illustrates the significant levels of investment the boys make in muscular power, physical skills and sporty postures because they experienced these as indicators of the successful achievement of hegemonic masculinity. Their participation in sport, as a masculinising institution, in particular offered them the opportunity to embody gender normatively. In the analysis attention is drawn to the social contexts of class, race, and sexuality, and the ways in which their intersections make specific versions of the masculine body possible. The analysis reveals that for those boys living in impoverished areas, and subject to social inequalities, the body was constructed in defensive terms where it is could be used as resource to mediate against potential violence and victimisation. Accrual of

power here is symbolised by a strong body and the ability to withstand pain. Participation in sport provided these boys the opportunity to connect their bodies to economic aspirations as sporting prowess represented a means of translating the power of the masculine body into economic success. For other boys in the study, who enjoyed high levels of economic and social capital, being skilled at sport and forceful in one's performance was central to laying claim to successful masculinity. These boys achieved middle class masculinity by routinely disciplining, training and honing their bodies. The accounts given by the boys also highlight the deeply heteronormative nature of successful masculinity in these contexts. Bhana's insightful analysis illustrates some of the ways in which power operates on boys' bodies; that investment in the body is vital to achieving masculinity for young boys; and that sport is a pivotal site where this is practiced. The chapter offers an important contribution to the understudied exploration of young boys' gendered and classed embodiment and highlights the significance of addressing how boys learn to do body and masculinity within school settings.

In "They've always go flat tummies and it really bugs us", Sue Jackson presents research on how pre-teen girls interact with constructions of femininity circulating in postfeminist popular culture. It has been argued that an intensified focus on the body, as a defining feature of the self, has become central to idealised femininity and that neoliberal values of self-responsibility tell young girls they are accountable for disciplining their bodies in accordance with norms which are, in reality, unrealistic. Jackson's research explores girls' encounters with feminine postfeminist media ideals in order to learn more about how they read and make sense of these constructions and the implications this has for their sense of self. There is a large body of research which has addressed the relationship between young women and media images. The dominant tradition within this literature has relied upon a 'media effects model' to explain the impact of media images on young women, however Jackson advances a more nuanced and complex analysis of the contradictions, ambiguities, and tensions that are present in girls' accounts of their embodiment. Where the media effects model constructs a linear relationship between girls' consumption of media images and negative evaluations they make of their own bodies, Jackson develops an approach which disrupts this simplistic account of media as the cause of negative effects. Instead the relation between bodies and images are framed as multiple and non-linear; as an ongoing and mutual encounter which cannot be reduced to a singular meaning. By framing the analysis in this way Jackson is able to discern the complex and contradictory accounts in her study of an ethnically diverse, middle class group of girls aged 11–13 in New Zealand. While these girls reported negative experiences associated with postfeminist constructions of femininity such as 'feeling fat' and 'kinda bad about yourself' these feelings of abjection were entwined with a critical and reflexive awareness of how their own bodies may, or may not, become consistent with idealised imagery. This chapter contributes theoretically and empirically to our understanding of the ways girls experience and knowingly engage with an intensified focus on bodily perfection central to the current postfeminist media culture in ways which are non-reductive and heterogeneous.

In their chapter “Fuck your body image!” Teen girls, twitter feminism and networked affect in and around a London theatre school’, Hanna Retallack, Jessica Ringrose and Emilie Lawrence explore the contradictory dynamics of postfeminist ‘luminosities’ surrounding the body and girls’ engagements with feminism. Their examples are drawn from a larger action research project that worked with academics and teachers across the UK, and relate mainly to a feminist group which was set up in a prominent London ‘theatre school’ where groups of girls from Year 8 to 10 meet each week. A key theme of these meetings is the ways through which the regulation and exploitation of the body within the context of a theatre school (in which pupils are marketed for consumption in entertainment industries) affects the way in which these bodies are felt, spoken and written. The authors explore these dynamics and interrogate McRobbie’s (2008) ‘aftermath of feminism’, highlighting the contradictory and complex dynamics in the competing discourses of postfeminism in dominant visual culture and the potentials enabled by the ‘feminist’ space in the school group. Social media is shown to be particularly crucial to the girls’ feminist group, providing a platform for sharing and collecting information and lived experiences of the body and gender, as the examples show. The authors suggest that the affordances of social media are critical in enabling the girls to ‘challenge postfeminist disaffection and bodily malaise’, as well as opposing the school’s particular regulative bodily environment. Drawing on affect theory and new materialist perspectives, this chapter contributes important examples of the complex ways in which the body, gender and feminism materialise, and the ways in which social media alongside feminist activism may provide a productive platform upon which to disrupt and challenge sexism and postfeminist discourses of bodily perfection.

John Erni’s chapter, ‘Internet Sex Chatting and “Vernacular Masculinity” among Hong Kong Youth’, explores the practice of ‘sex chat’ and suggests that this comprises a particular performance of gender he terms ‘vernacular masculinities’. Drawing on ‘netographic’ qualitative methods which explored the language, symbols, and meanings of users of popular internet chat site, the Hong Kong Golden Forum, Erni develops a theoretical examination of contemporary sexual values in the electronic age via empirical research. Though use of internet chatting is a source of ‘mild moral panic’ in contexts such as Hong Kong, Erni’s analysis suggests that chat forums ‘offer a particularly rich ground for the investigation of how the learning bodies of “sex” are negotiated and reconfigured’. Erni’s chapter contributes to sociological theorisations of contemporary sexual values, providing important insights into the ways in which gender is constructed, negotiated and produced in online environments including “sex chat.” The dynamics of this e-space also contribute to the production of gender, as sex chatting takes place in a predominantly male space which contributes to the production of particular forms of (hegemonic, heterosexual) masculinities. Whilst Erni characterises the vernacular masculinities in sex chatting as exhibiting tendencies of sexual objectification of women and misogyny, he demonstrates that it is important to explore how masculine sensibility is enabled and produced by chatroom culture, and to reflect on what this tells us about the dynamics of sex, gender and power in virtual spaces.

Reconceptualising Health, Wellbeing and ‘Recovering’

Health and wellbeing are key areas of research relating to youth and children; however, the way the body is generally approached is a point of contention in research scholarship on youth, particularly by those seeking to unsettle dominant ‘risk’ paradigms (see Fox 2012; Duff 2014; Cahill 2015). The chapters in this section show health research and theory as a space of empirical and conceptual innovation in youth and childhood studies. This section discusses alternative conceptual perspectives on the young body and explores themes of recovering, resistance and broader understandings of ‘health’ in relation to some of the core wellbeing concerns surrounding youth, such as mental illness (Duff), eating disorders (Fox and Alldred); sexualisation and sexting (Rice & Watson) and body image and complicating the narrow ‘image’ of health (Coffey).

Nick Fox and Pam Alldred’s chapter, ‘The Resisting Young Body’ draws on a new materialist perspective to explore the dynamics of power that surround young bodies and deem them ‘at risk’, and the ways in which engagements with relations of power also produce bodily capacities for ‘resisting’. The authors draw on two case studies to explore the potentials for young bodies’ resisting. The first is drawn from Fox’s previous qualitative study in the context of diet and the ‘transgressive pro-ana movement’; and the second is drawn from previous empirical research by Alldred of young bodies and masculinities and their engagements with school-based sexual education. The authors provide a clear and detailed explication of new materialist perspectives in relation to power and resistance, locating both in the minutiae of the ‘daily actions and encounters between people, things and social institutions’. They also introduce Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts of affect, territorialisation and assemblage to assist in the study of relations which is so crucial to new materialist perspectives. These concepts are mobilised to explore the ways pro-ana and sexuality education are implicated in the potential for bodily resistance; to medical or biopsychosocial explanatory models of recovery in the case of pro-ana, and to the subversion of the educational system in the case of the boys in sex and relationships classes. In their analysis, the focus is not on ‘bodies’ and their ‘agency’ but arrangements of material relations and the affectivities that drew these into assemblage. They assess the micropolitics of the affective flows, or the territorialisations, de-territorialisations and re-territorialisations in these assemblages, and the capacities these produced in bodies. This analysis provides clear rationale for the potential of a new materialist approach to make sense of empirical data, to assist in new understandings of the dynamics of power and bodily practices of resisting in the lives of young people.

Carla Rice and Erin Watson’s chapter, ‘Girls and sexting: The missing story of sexual subjectivity in a sexualised and digitally-mediated world’ argues the need for a more carefully theorized understanding of sexual pleasure in discussions of sexting and sexualisation which inform sexual education approaches, and have significant implications for girls’ sexual health and wellbeing. They provide a

comprehensive review of existing literature on girls' sexting and sexualisation and argue that a number of critiques can be made of the dominant approaches, such as ignoring girls' sexual agency, for denying their sexual subjectivity and for overlooking complex cultural meanings given to race, disability, and other embodied differences in sexualised exchanges and imagery. Using feminist new materialist perspectives along with embodiment theories, they sketch the possibilities associated with approaching sexualities as 'emergent forces' that materialise through the 'interactivity of biology, psyche, and society.' A more carefully theorised understanding of the body in relation to sexting and sexualisation, they argue, can enable a number of developments, including the 'conditions of possibility for sexuality justice', challenging the imperatives of purity and hypersexuality, engaging girls in dialogue, promoting progressive and inclusive sexuality education, and working collaboratively as academics, educators and advocates.

'Recovering Bodies: The Production of the Recoverable Subject in Eating Disorder Treatment Regimes', by Jen Rinaldi, Andrea Lamarre and Carla Rice provide a comprehensive overview of the implicit theorisations of the body which tend to underpin the approaches of eating disorder treatment. They argue that the 'biopedagogies' which underpin the approaches aimed at 'recovery' in eating disorder treatment aim to produce particular kinds of 'subjects', which tend to be inflected with heteronormativity, whiteness and middle class positions. They show the range of binaries which underpin the implicit approach of much eating disorder treatment, such as disordered/recovered, unruly body/controlled body, and show how these map with feminist critiques of the legacy of Cartesian thought for theorising sex and gender. Women's bodies in these contexts are located as 'hysterical and grotesque'; an understanding which is shown to be particularly relevant to the 'disordered' eating body through anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. They introduce body-becoming theory as an approach to mediate between the material and discursive, showing the need for bodies to be deliberately conceptually engaged in eating disorder theories to 'open up space for diverse embodiments of recovery' beyond the current limiting positions offered by dominant biopedagogies.

The chapter by Duff also engages in the space of problematising the theories and perspectives which underpin approaches to recovery, in relation to youth mental illness. Like the chapter by Rinaldi, Lamarre and Rice, Duff argues that much of the literature on recovery 'fails to account for the diversity of recovery experiences'. Where recovery is understood as a process involving the complexity of lived experience, Duff argues, we may have a more useful way of thinking about the dynamics between illness and recovery. Duff draws on the concept of 'affective pedagogies', developed from the Deleuzian tradition, to conceptualise the affective, embodied nuances engaged in the everyday experiences of young people's processes of recovery. Like Fox and Alldred, Duff engages these concepts through the use of empirical data, including interviews, visual methods and mapping techniques, also incorporating autoethnographic elements to account for the affective intensities of the research engagements. The primary example explores the affective, material and embodied processes associated with playing the guitar and how this features in the process of 'recovery' for one young person. Duff's chapter

shows the value of this perspective of bodies as capacities, and suggests that a focus on affective capacities can help us better understand how to better promote diverse modes of recovery for young people with mental illness.

In “She was becoming too healthy and it was just becoming dangerous: Body work and assemblages of health”, Julia Coffey builds on recent theoretical developments in sociological and feminist theory to develop a non-foundational approach to studying how young people perceive the relationship between their body work practices and dominant constructions of health. By conceptualising health as an ‘assemblage’ Coffey argues that we are able to more fully understand the production of embodied subjectivity. This approach encourages a fluid and dynamic understanding of bodies as unstable and incomplete entities that are continually made and remade through their connection and engagement with other entities and objects including norms, discourses and patterns of meaning. Assemblages are constituted by functional connections which affect what bodies can do, either enhancing or limiting their potential for further connections. By using this Deleuzian ontology Coffey delivers an analysis of how ideologies of health and individualism affect young people’s understandings of the body work practices they engage in. The findings from her study of young men and women in Melbourne, Australia indicate that participants engaged with the concept of health in an array of different ways, however, what is common to their accounts is that health was a state which emerged through encounters rather than as natural or pre-existing state of being. Therefore, the healthy body is one that is always in a process of becoming. This insightful analysis raises questions for how health assemblages interact with a range of normalising forces including gender, ‘race’, class, ethnicity and ability. Furthermore, the analysis complicates our understanding of the embodied experiences of health allowing for an approach which exceeds thinking about body work as a means for achieving a body that looks a particular way or is consistent with a particular image. Instead health is not a fixed and determinate quality. Coffey argues this has important implications for the promotion of health across a range of sites including education and health services. Discussion about health should focus not on how a person ‘looks’ but rather on lived, experiential factors in order to fully appreciate health as contingent, constructed and continuously enacted.

Methodological and Pedagogical Innovations

This section explores some methodological and pedagogical innovations in addressing young bodies. The chapters discuss the use of innovative methodological approaches, or the application of new theoretical approaches to the body in empirical work. The chapters in this section speak both to methodology for research (putting embodiment theories into practice in research methods) and for understanding learning (embodied pedagogies).

Dianne Mulcahy’s chapter on ‘capturing affect’ highlights the potential for theoretical developments such as those inspired by new materialist or Deleuzian

perspectives to inform pedagogy and practice. Helen Cahill's chapter illustrates the potential for post-structural theoretical approaches to inform the pedagogical strategies used to address social change in relation to gender and sexuality. Claudia Mitchell, Naydene De Lange and Xuan Thuy Nguyen discuss the need to further evolve an ethics sufficient to enable attention to the body in visual research, using their work with photovoice with girls with disabilities as the context through which to raise both pragmatic and ethical imperatives. Together these chapters provide an illustration of the need for a heightened attention to the way in which the body is positioned, engaged and understood in empirical research and in pedagogical design.

Dianne Mulcahy uses a discussion of museum education to explore the role of affect in learning. In her chapter 'Sticky' learning: Assembling bodies, objects and affects at the museum and beyond', she draws on Deleuzian philosophy to analyse the way in which museum-based learning encounters involving objects, bodies and affects can activate political and ethical learning. Building on the work of Sara Ahmed on the 'sticky' nature of affect, she charts the way in which museum learning becomes attached through particular affects and has the capacity to leave a lasting impression as bodies engage within and beyond the museum space. She provides an elegant outline of the methodological approach she has used to engage in a materialist social enquiry, analysing the affective learnings of primary and secondary school students as they occupy the museum space. She uses video-based case studies of the interactions that occur as the students engage in free-form interaction within particular exhibition spaces. She complements the video data with interviews conducted with curators, teachers and students.

Mulcahy uses her empirical work conducted in Melbourne, Australia to delicately chart the way in which the students experiencing the museum collectively encounter and co-construct meaning from the museum artefacts. By framing the body in relational terms, she is able to attend to what the bodies are *doing* in the museum space, and the way in which they pick up traces of affect from the objects and imaginaries that they encounter. As the students handle the objects in the museum collection, a transfer takes place between objects, individual bodies and the collective body. This triggers the students' engagement in ethical thinking about the lives and conditions of others who live, or have lived, beyond the relative comfort of their own lives.

She argues that an understanding of affect as 'stickiness' can be useful in assisting educators to understand how an embodied learning experience can contribute to the struggle against injustice via activation of an ethically and affectively engaged response. Her work makes a particularly rich contribution to understandings of learning as embodied encounter. Her exploration of assemblages, and of learning as both process and product, highlights role of affect in learning.

Also working with a pedagogical interest, Helen Cahill's chapter, 'Playing the inside out: Using drama as an embodied medium through which to work on changing gender norms', explores the use of 'embodied alter-ego techniques' as a means for deconstructing the ways gender discourses shape everyday lives. In contrast to a humanist tradition which presumes a stable, self-present subject who can be empowered through sexuality and gender rights education, Cahill employs a

poststructuralist framework in order to understand the contingency of the self and the potential education programmes present for disrupting the dis-enabling norms which, through their constant iteration, make gender relations appear natural and inevitable. Using a range of examples of the use of drama-based learning activities from sexuality and gender rights programmes in Bangladesh and Vietnam, this analysis effectively illustrates how poststructuralist theory may inform a pedagogy for change. In these education programmes women participate in a range of exercises which invite them to embody knowledge in new and creative ways, thus allowing them to recognise how gender norms work to shape their lives whilst also working to re-construct these norms. Using Deleuzian inspired theory, Cahill argues that these programmes involve performances which create 'nomad' or 'deterritorialised' spaces within which the self may be done differently. By participating in these programmes the women come to know or understand the impact of dominant gender norms through embodied experiences of how gender works to constrain their agency. Her analysis reveals that experiences produced by innovative learning activities open up the possibility for further processes of change and transformation in the embodied performance of identity. This chapter contributes important insights into the ways poststructuralist theoretical constructs can be used effectively to produce alternative knowledges via the use of embodied learning.

In their chapter 'Visual Ethics with and through the body', Claudia Mitchell, Naydene De Lange and Xuan Thuy Nguyen draw on their experience of using photovoice to conduct research with girls with disabilities in Vietnam to discuss issues about the ethics of representation. They discuss the way in which people with a disability are typically excluded from view and left without opportunity for voice. They note that within the tradition of family photography, persons with disabilities are often photographed in such a way as to disguise their disability. In contrast to this domestic erasure, photographs of people with disabilities used for public consumption tend to have a heightened focus on disfigured parts of the body, with a loss of focus on the rest of the body and the loss of a sense that this person is whole in themselves. This fractured focus serves to replicate and reinforce an abelist ideology and a problem-centric interpretation of what it means to have a disability.

They also introduce a critical readership of some of the assumptions about 'bodies' commonly made in research with disabilities. They use their work with girls with disabilities to raise some important ethical questions pertaining to the use of photographic methods and bodies in research. They trouble the exclusion of faces as key identifiers of research subjects and the tradition of erasing faces rather than other body parts to protect the privacy of research subjects. They point out that identity could just as readily be revealed through the images of other body parts made distinctive as a result of a disability, or indeed of the wheelchair within which a particular body is usually framed.

Drawing additionally on a body of their own photovoice research conducted in a range of developing and developed countries, they point to the performative, playful, staged and situated nature of the photos that people create using this methodology. They note that the staged nature of bodily poses fashioned for the camera requires a particular semiotic readership of the body.

Their chapter culminates with a set of pointers to guide those considering the ethical dilemmas inherent when aiming both to make bodies visible and voiced, whilst also striving to protect the privacy of research subjects. They raise questions about the ethics and pragmatics of using visual modes of research within a saturated photographic world. They discuss the control and ownership challenges related to determining the boundary between images taken as part of the research, and those simultaneously taken by participants on their personal devices.

Conclusion

The chapters in this collection aim to contribute to the fields of youth and childhood studies through extending the growing focus on the body as both a conceptual tool and site of experience in feminist sociology, cultural studies and education. They work to problematise the core discourses and knowledge which currently frame not only discussions of the body, but youth and childhood more generally: those of risk, informed by psycho-social developmental approaches. Much mainstream work on youth approaches the body through a paradigm of psychosexual development related to 'maturation', in which young bodies are linear teleological in the broader story of youth becoming adults. Experiences which fall outside or beyond this normative framing become 'problems' to be addressed or regulated and youth themselves are characterized as being 'at risk'. Theoretically, this collection challenges and unsettles this thinking and opens new possibilities for theory, research and practice in fields of youth and childhood studies supported by empirical data. Through a focus on the body, the authors do not only approach the individual, but also embrace social and material as the context through which young bodies are lived. These chapters show the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications that emerge from a reframed approach to understanding children and youth and children through a focus on the body and embodiment.

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Part I
The Young Body: Gender and Sexualities

Queer Youthscapes in Asia: Embodied Modernities and Trans-Embodiments

Audrey Yue

Abstract The lives of young people in Asia have been transformed in recent decades as a result of rapid development, industrialisation and globalisation. From new life-making subjects to civic netizens, the embodiment practices of young people are central to these narratives of Asian modernities. Exemplary here is the role that sexuality has played in constituting new desires and identities. From the correctness of *suzhi* (human quality) in China to gay consumers of creative economies in Thailand and Singapore, the practices of sexual embodiment have become new agents of complicity and change. In this chapter, I critically introduce and canvass the field of queer Asian studies to showcase a range of key case studies that demonstrate these practices of embodiments. Further considering how these practices foreground the convergence of the two formations of ‘queerscape’ and ‘youthscape’, I show how youth sexuality, as a site of embodied modernity, can be a productive arena to consider the challenges of transitions and futures as populations and places are constantly being made and remade, and called into becoming. I conclude by further demonstrating these practices using trans-embodiment through the figures of the tomboy (in Indonesia), the boy-head (in Hong Kong) and the butch (in Singapore).

Introduction

Rapid development, industrialisation and globalisation have transformed the lives of young people in Asia. As new life-making subjects, they are also central to these narratives of Asian modernities. Exemplary here is the role sexuality plays in the formation of new desires and identities. From learning the correctness of *suzhi* (human quality) in China to becoming gay consumers of creative economies in Thailand and Singapore, young people are the agents of complicity and change.

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This chapter addresses these transformations by focusing on LGBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) youth cultures. Using cultural studies approaches to media and everyday life, this chapter examines how lesbian cinema and transgender self-fashioning have created new practices that challenge the normative patterns of transition experienced at the levels of the economic and social, as well as through the life cycle.

The first section begins by contextualising the development of Asia and the effects of its structural transition on space, time and the body. It highlights these effects as part of the process of embodied modernity, a process where spatial-temporal progress is most acutely experienced at the level of the body. Further evaluating these impacts on young people, it reveals how the teleology of (structural and youth) transitions, and their neoliberal subject-formations, has reproduced young people as economic objects rather than social agents.

The second and third sections map the queer Asian youthscape and critically discuss its challenge to the teleology of transitions. As a new space of sexual desire and identity created through the synergy of global and local cultures, the queer Asian youthscape is a regional imaginary consisting of people, capital and resources. Using the popular film genre of the transnational Chinese schoolgirl lesbian romance as an example of a media commodity and resource that circulate in such a space, this chapter shows how normative time is challenged by girlhood as an alternative temporality that interrupts adult time with its new expressions of intimacy. Further focusing on the everyday performances of gender and sexuality by young masculine women—the tomboi in Indonesia, the boy-head in Hong Kong and the nightclub butch in Singapore, it evaluates how their practices of self-fashioning—practices of trans-embodiment—use body transformations not only to challenge the binary sex/gender system but also for neoliberal accumulation. These sections critically survey scholarship in queer Asian studies—an emergent field that arose in the last ten years on the margins of Asian studies and sexuality studies—by engaging work that has provincialized Western-centric queer theory and widened the frames of queer knowledge-production. It mobilises this field to introduce new practices of the young queer communities in Asia who have come of age by making claims to their sexual identities through alternative trajectories of transitions. The queer Asian youthscape, this chapter argues, provides a fertile arena to expose the normative politics of transitions.

A conceptual framing to the discourse of transition is necessary to highlight this chapter's methodological approach. Common to youth studies, Asian modernisation studies and transgender studies is the discourse of transition. Transition is the process of moving from one stage to another. In youth studies, it refers to the period of physical and social change that falls between the life course of childhood and adulthood (Heinz 2009). Traditionally conceived of as a unidirectional and linear process, the concept examines school-to-work transitions. The field of youth transitions studies now focuses on additional transitions such as extended transitions faced by longer education and uncertain employment opportunities (Skelton 2002), as well as the importance of biographical (Henderson 2007) and cultural approaches (Woodman and Wyn 2015). In studies of Asian modernity, transition is

a discourse to denote the fast pace of economic, social and cultural transformation in the past four or so decades as a result of postcolonial and postsocialist development (see e.g. Chiang et al. 2004; Herrschel 2007; Safarian and Dobson 2002). Aided by capitalism, this discourse—similar to the linear model of normative youth transitions studies—also invokes a linear pathway through the teleology of modern progress. In transgender studies, the term transition has at least two meanings. The first stems from biomedicine and refers to the process of switching from one's biological sex to one's desired sex. One's desired sex is opposite to one's biological sex. This process has required and been legitimated by sex reassignment surgery. The second meaning comes from queer theory and is mobilised as a critical site to question the stability of the material sex as a referent and its unstable relationship to socially constructed norms of gender (Stryker 2013). The following sections mobilise these discourses of transition.

Transitions in Asia: On the Youthscapes of Space, Time, Body

Section one provides a critical context to consider how society's structural transitions have affected the transitions of young people in Asia and impacted their processes of identity-formation. It exposes the normative politics of transition across three domains: time, space and body. As Asia modernises, time is teleological and space becomes developmental, while the body and its subject are incorporated as human capital.

The pace and scale of change in Asia in the past fifty years has been unprecedented. This is evident across the domains of space, time and body, and has impacted the lives of young people. Many countries broke away from colonial rule and became independent postcolonial nation-states, and some such as China and Vietnam turned their command systems into prosperous post-socialist models. Asian economies flourished and many transitioned from under-developed to newly industrialising nation-states. While the world's average annual growth rate for this period was 2 % (Kose and Ozturk 2014), Asian economies grew exponentially: in 1980, the rate of growth, for example, in China, Indonesia, India and Singapore was 15.2, 7.2, 3.8 and 8.8 % respectively; in 2013, and in the aftermath the sluggish global post-GFC recovery, economic growth was steadfastly maintained, registering 7.7, 5.8, 5.0 and 3.9 % respectively (World Bank 2014). New clusters such as Asian Tigers and BRIC were coined to capture such fiscal clout.¹ About 717 million young people aged 15–24 live in this region, making up 60 % of the world's youth

¹Between 1980s and 1990s, the term 'Asian Tiger' was used to refer Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, countries that achieved an annual growth rate of more than 7 %. In early 2000s, the acronym BRIC was coined to refer to Brazil, Russia, India and China, the big 4 countries whose combined economies were predicted to eclipse the most developed and richest nations of the world.

population (UN ESCAP 2013). High birth rates, especially during the earlier two decades, have resulted in a young workforce that has contributed to the region's productive capacity and rising income. It is estimated that in the next century, young people will make up more than half of the working population in the region (Australian Government 2012, p. 32).

These transformations in national economies and societies have reconfigured relations in the region, and are also complexly related to other processes occurring globally. Important to note here is that Asia is a vast, diverse, disparate and unequal region; it is home to some of the world's most technologically advanced (e.g. South Korea), richest (e.g. Singapore) and poorest (e.g. Bangladesh, Cambodia and Laos) countries. These patterns of economic and social transformation—patterns that do not conform to a singular economic and social model of similarity and universality—are also reflected in the transformation of Asian youth cultures.

Paul Clark (2012), for example, provides a succinct historical overview of the changes experienced by young people in China in the past forty years. Marking out three distinct periods—from 1968 during the Cultural Revolution; from 1988 in the wake of the Tiananmen Square student democracy movement; and from 2008 in the aftermath of the Beijing Olympics—he examines the country's transition from communism to neoliberal post-socialism. Clark (2012) argues that Chinese youths have always carved out cultural practices of belonging and fashioned identities using indigenous and foreign sources. From the theatre and music performances of the Red Guards in the 1960s, to the dissent of Western-influenced Chinese rock music such as that of Cui Jian's in the 1990s, and the influence of the K-pop wave amongst the current Internet-savvy generation, Clark shows how youth cultures are distinct sites of identity-formation. He argues they “cannot be understood...in grid patterns of simple binaries: Chinese and Western, local and global, or traditional and modern. The developments are more complex and also spontaneous, ungoverned, uneven, and unpredictable. An assumed teleology from local to global is misleading, as Chinese elements coexisted and intermingled with the international and were transformed and reinvented” (Clark 2012, p. 192). These transformations in Chinese youth cultures are exemplary of the dynamic formation of the youthscape.

The concept of the youthscape highlights how a new world of youth cultures is created as a result of the globalization and indigenization of youth practices and identities. The concept follows Arjun Appadurai's (1996) seminal spatial model of cultural globalisation where new worlds—what he calls *scapes*—are formed by the deterritorialising and reterritorialising flows of ideologies, finances, technologies, people and media. The key to Appadurai's model is the disjunctive characteristic of globalisation. Rather than following the globalisation-as-one-world thesis where global flows are unidirectional (usually from the West to the East, or the Global North to the Global South) and have the propensity to colonise, homogenise and universalise the local, this model draws attention to irregular globalisation and its multi-directional flows. Maira and Soep (2005) coin the term *youthscape* to refer precisely to these disjunctures where local youth cultures are constituted in the intersections and contradictions of global cultural flows, and through the specificities of political and social currents.

Postindustrial transitions identified above have clearly reconfigured youthscapes in Asia. If these structural transformations, as Belinda Smaill argues, can be understood through the historical frame as “a site of becoming” (space/locality), the notion of youth, too, has been posed frequently and ontologically, as a “state of becoming” (time/temporality) (Smaill 2008, p. 3). Both are associated with the change and advent of the new. While Asia’s new regimes of capital accumulation rely on the energy, optimism and resilience of young people, its teleological narrative of development has also led to the uneven distribution of life chances. This is especially evident in the opportunities for schooling and employment. Take literacy rates across the region for example: although South Korea and Japan are in the world’s top ten countries with the highest literacy rates, the rest of the region’s emerging economies is at least 3.5 years behind the level of advanced countries (Lee and Francisco 2012). Against this context, youth has become a site of both the promise and uncertainty of capital accumulation and postindustrial transition. Young people’s futures in Asia, like everywhere else in the world, are becoming increasingly uncertain. Their transition is also complex, especially for young women (Nahar et al. 2013). With fast-changing markets that have reordered national economies and reduced domestic opportunities, the forms of life inhabited by their parents in terms of secure employment and benefits are no longer available to them. They are now expected to take up more and more life-making practices to improve their future chances. Transitions are not only experienced across regional space and developmental time; but the material body is also a site of becoming.

Young people embark on life-improvement practices to embrace the burden of self-development that are characteristic of the enterprising neoliberal subject. Examining their future in East Asia, Ann Anagnost defines these practices as “embodied human capital,” as “investments in the self to ensure one’s forward career progression” (Anagnost 2013, p. 2). These investments are most evident through education. Not only are governments putting more emphasis on education, young people themselves are staying at school longer to improve their knowledge capital and becoming more educated than their predecessors (Mason and Lee 2012). They are now required to enter the global economy through their new status as human capital. Embodiment, as a process of how the body has acquired meaning through signification, has abstracted young people as material social agents into objects of economic labour. Although their changing economic roles show how they are always in the process of being made in relation to national projects of human engineering, such as through top-down state projects that attempt to create new kinds of subjects for political and economic transformation, it is significant to note they are also active agents of change. The term embodied modernities (Martin and Heinrich 2006), captures these processes of becoming that are tied to the changes of the new and most acutely experienced at the level of the body.

Against this backdrop, it remains important to ask: how are young people actively fashioning their life trajectories within this logic of neoliberal capital accumulation, and how do these practices conform to and/or challenge normative conventions of space, time and the body? The following presents a new critical frame to problematise these processes by focusing on the practices of queer

youthscapes in Asia, in particular, through the schoolgirl romance film genre from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and everyday transgender youth embodiment in East and South-East Asia.

Space and Time: Queer Asia and the Chinese Schoolgirl Romance Film

Section two examines the queer Asian youthscape as a site to challenge normative transition's conception of time and space. To question the norms of straight space, this section shows the queer Asian youthscape as a new site for sexual minority groups to come together, as well as an alternative arena for cultural production and consumption. To question the norms of straight time, this section shows how reproductive time is challenged by the new lesbian film genre of the school romance.

The rise of queer Asia has arguably been as equally prominent as the rise of Asia. In a region marked by conservative heterosexual values that reify the marriage and the family (e.g. family values as Confucian, Hindu or Islamic Asian values), LGBTs have become increasingly visible in public cultures. This has been made possible by: the legalisation of homosexuality in some countries such as Thailand (1956), Hong Kong (1991) and China (1997); Internet access that has opened up new platforms for community support and sexual identity role modeling (Berry et al. 2003); government interventions in commerce and the creative economies that have led to the rise of gay and lesbian businesses, and pink tourism (Jackson 2011; Yue 2012); the public health management of HIV/AIDS (Altman 2001); and; a thriving regional subculture of media production and consumption including social media portals, films, books and circuit parties. It is estimated that there are at least 200 million people—or 20 % of the population—who identify as LGBTs in Asia (Marsh 2013). Of these, approximately 143 million are between the ages of 15–24. Not coincidentally, this zeitgeist of sexual coming out has also mirrored the coming of age of the aforementioned mainstream postcolonial generation. 'Queer Asia' is a collective term to describe this regional imaginary. As a space of sub/cultural production and everyday consumption, it has also created distinct practices that have challenged heteronormativity. Below is a meta-analysis of the transnational Chinese schoolgirl romance film that critically elucidates the genre's challenge to 'straight' or normative conventions of time and space.

The transnational Chinese schoolgirl romance film was a popular genre in the 1990s and early 2000s. Usually in Mandarin and Cantonese, these films were made in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, by mainstream and same-sex identified filmmakers. These films have received global critical acclaim in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Germany and Slovakia, and are circulated widely across domestic mainstream film markets, and international mainstream and queer film festivals. They were also very popular among Chinese-speaking lesbian audiences in East Asia, and the global Chinese diasporas. The highest profile film, for example, *Spider Lilies* (dir. Zero

Chou 2007), won the Teddy Award at the Berlin International Film Festival, and was selected by Chinese lesbians in Singapore as the most popularly watched film of that period (Yue 2011). Films in this group include *Fish and Elephant* (dir. Yu Li 2001); *The Intimates* (dir. Jacob Cheung 1997); *Butterfly* (dir. Yan Yan Mak 2004); *Hu-Du-Men* (dir. Shu Kei 2007); *20–30–40* (dir. Sylvia Chang 2004); *Spacked Out* (dir. Lawrence Ah Mon 2000) and *Drifting Flowers* (dir. Zero Chou 2008).

This genre shares a common melodramatic storyline: either through the main plot or as a subtext, they narrate the unfolding of erotically charged relations among adolescent girls and young women. Usually told in flashback (from the point-of-view of an adult woman remembering her adolescent love-crush), these stories are set in high schools and revolve around the same-sex love between two schoolgirls.

Fran Martin (2010) calls this genre a type of memorial film characterised by a mode of adult recollection about the foreclosure of female homoeroticism. She focuses on the film's framing just before the flashback sequence. This iconic framing, a 'backward glance' shot of an adult woman turning her head back to look behind, usually begins the film. It functions as a structural transition to the flashback mode and sets up the film's diegesis of remembering. The flashback not only interrupts the present time of the narrative with a past time; it also interrupts adult time with girlhood time.

The focus on girlhood time is reinforced by Helen Hok Sze Leung (2008) who has also examined this film genre, as well as through the genre of campus fiction. She suggests these films and books reveal an ambivalence about adult heterosexuality as an inevitable and desirable outcome of girlhood, and proposes examining girlhood through disidentification. Where girlhood is normatively marked by its temporal transition into adult womanhood, disidentification allows girls to refuse to identify with the category of woman and create instead a new self-identity by remaining as girls. For her, girlhood is an identity located in a different temporality that resists the gendered expectations of normative womanhood. Normative womanhood is marked by the reproductive time of biological clocks, marriage, child rearing and family routine (Halberstam 2005). Girlhood is not about a refusal to grow up; it simply means a rejection of the linear time that equates responsibility and adulthood with the heterosexual norms of marriage and childrearing. As anti-heteronormative and non-reproductive queer time, girlhood also defies the national time of reproduction. This temporality disrupts straight time, and also reflects a non-teleological time that has the potential to resist the official narratives of modernity, progress and maturity associated with and expected of economic, social and youth transitions.

As symbolic texts and institutional commodities, these films embrace new girlhood intimacies that celebrate an alternative temporality. They also inform the space of an emergent queer Asian youthscape. Emanating from queer Asia, and drawing on the queerscape as a new world created by the globalization and localization of queer media cultures (McLelland 2003), as well as the oblique spaces of non-heteronormativity reclaimed and reinvented on the margins of straight (mainstream; official; colonial) spaces such as that of the high school in the lesbian schoolgirl romance genre (Leung 2001), the queer Asian youthscape consists of people, resources and capital. Further on, it entails how these elements

combine to become the repository for young sexual minorities to further imagine new desires and identities. It is especially significant for adolescent and young LGBTs in Asia who often choose to hide their sexual identities from their families, communities and peers (Chang 2005). The following maps these desires and identities through the everyday practice of trans-embodiment to show how, in addition to the queer Asian youthscape's challenge to conventional space and time, the cisgendered body is also a site of intervention.

Body: FTM Trans-Embodiment—the Tomboi, Boy-Head and Butch in Southeast and East Asia

Section three challenges the site of the body as embodied human capital by showing how the self-fashioning practices of transgender embodiment appropriate the strategy of neoliberal accumulation to carve out alternative forms of life-making and sexual identities.

In recent years there has been a rise in trans-identification among young people. Whether through medical transition or sexual and gendered identification, more and more young people, from as young as the age of eight are coming out as transgender. Trans-identification has become an accepted social, sexual and medical practice in the West and across some parts of Asia. Where Singapore was the center of sex reassignment surgery in the 1970s, Thailand is now the heart of such medical tourism. Across East and South East Asia, from China to Hong Kong, Manila and Bangkok, female to male trans-boys are also becoming visible in the mainstream, winning television singing idol competitions and forming regional touring tomboy boybands. Since the twenty-one-year-old self-proclaimed tomboy Li Yuchun's (Chris Lee) win as the 2005 China Idol, Suppanad Jittaleela (Tina), a Thai model, singer and actress, has also rose to fame with her debut portrayal as a high school tom in the popular mainstream Thai movie *Yes or No (Yaak Rak Gaw Rak Loey)* (dir. Saratswadee Wongsomphet 2010), and become a heartthrob with lesbian fan clubs across China, Malaysia and the Philippines. Similarly, after winning the 2013 *Thailand Got Talent* contest, the K-pop inspired boyband group, Tom Actz, has also achieved celebrity status in Asia. These practices draw out two significances when considering the queer Asian youthscape and its critical capacity to challenge normative meanings about young people and their bodies. First, these are increasingly a key part of the youthscape, creating alternative images, identities and desires that are circulated across the inter-Asian media and sexual cultural circuits, and forming a resource for young queer and straight people to debate, question and model their own gender presentations and sexual identities; second, the concept of trans, with its metaphor for crossing from one threshold to another, provides a useful and relevant theoretical tool to problematise the teleology of transitions (youth and otherwise). This section will first examine the latter to establish its conceptual framing in order to further evaluate the former.

In the binary sex system, the material body must align with its prescribed gender. The transgender is a term that reveals how gendered bodies can take up diverse subject positions that move back and forth across the ideologies that surround the boundaries of binary sex and gender. It is used to describe practices that transgress these norms of sex and gender. For example, in Western narratives of female to male (FTM) transgender, the use of testosterone or T has become a tool to acquire the muscles, facial hair and deep voice associated with the cultural intelligibility of masculinity. Similarly, in non-Western narratives of male to female (MTF) transgender, terms from India and the Philippines such as *hijra* and *bakla* address the complexity of local sexual identities. While both have legal rights as the third sex, the *bakla* identifies as a woman and is attracted to a cisgendered man (Manalansan 2003), and the *hijra* is defined by the removal of the male genitalia and performs femininity through dress, make up and deportment (Reddy 2005). Writing about transgender studies, Susan Stryker notes of the field:

[it] is concerned with anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood (Stryker 2013, p. 487).

While the transgender presents different genders that create new types of subjectivities and identities, the trans metaphor—as a process of not only crossing from one state to another but in doing so, exposing how hierarchies and boundaries of embodied difference are constructed in power-systems that act on the body—is apt to understanding the politics of transition. The key here is the emphasis on embodiment.

Feminist scholarship on embodiment helps extend this chapter's early definition of embodiment as a process of how the body has come to acquire meaning through social constructions and lived experiences: it is "a way of inhabiting the world as well as the source of personhood, self, and subjectivity, and the precondition of intersubjectivity" (Mascia-Lees 2011, p. 2). Embodiment reveals how meanings are encoded onto the body; it exposes how social constructions and lived experiences are created through power structures that act on and shape the social practices of subjects, and; it is also a critical framework committed to the agency of individuals and communities. Embodiment's focus on the lived experiences of the body has been discussed through phenomenology (Meynell 2009). The term 'lived body' highlights bodies as "assemblages of practices, discourses, images, institutional arrangements, and specific places and projects" (Farquhar and Lock 2007, p. 1). Emphasising contingency and fluidity rather than fixity and containment, embodiment practices are varied, ranging from personhood, gender, race to aesthetics, transnationalism and neoliberalism. The following three short case studies offer a critical review of trans-embodiment to further demonstrate these practices.

Indonesia: The Body Knowledge of Tombois

Homosexuality is legal in the predominantly Muslim Indonesia. Increased Islamization in recent years have impacted the public and private lives of LGBTs, such as the public caning of homosexuals in Aceh in 2014, the Internet censorship of gay content in 2012 and the government ban of the ongoing gay and lesbian film festival since 2010. Despite this, the capital city of Jakarta and the creative province of Surabaya have a thriving gay and lesbian subculture consisting of bars, night-clubs and support groups, and the Seminyak beachside resort in Bali is a renowned destination for gay tourism.

The Indonesian term for same-sex attracted women is called lesbi, a derivative of the English word lesbian. The embodied masculine woman who is attracted to a feminine woman is commonly known through its subcultural lingo as the tomboi. In the general parlance, the spelling ('boi' instead of 'boy') is used to refer to embodied masculine women who are not medically transitioning. In Evelyn Blackwood's anthropology of tombois in the town of Padang in West Sumatra, she defines tomboi as "female bodied" individuals who "express a sense of self that plays with gender, responds to gender expectations and normative masculine codes" (2011a, p. 219; see also Blackwood 2011b). Physically dressing, eating and behaving like men, and performing their gender through clothing, talking, walking and attitude, their claim to masculinity accords with how dominant manhood is viewed and accepted in Indonesia. For the tombois, self-identity is formed through their own dress and deportment, as well as through their experiences in the social world. Blackwood calls this practice "body knowledge" (2011a, p. 210). Body knowledge combines identity and embodiment to show the interpellation of one's identity constituted in and through social recognition and experiences. She offers "a theory of contingent masculinities" (2011a, p. 210) to refer to the multiple and conflicting subject positions tombois assume as they navigate across the different spaces of the family home, the community, and their lesbi world. Bound by filial piety and family loyalty, they dress down and exhibit normative femininity when they are among family and community; when out with other lesbis, they heighten their masculine competency. The theory of contingent masculinities contests the essentialism of binary categories and shows how flexible gendered subject-positions can be transgressive by moving back and forth across normative sex and gender systems.

Hong Kong: The Self-Fashioning Boy-Heads

Homosexuality was decriminalized in Hong Kong in 1997 when the British colony returned to communist Chinese sovereignty under the one-country, two-systems rule. That year, the Cantonese gay film, *Happy Together* (dir. Wong Kar-wai) won the highest prize at the prestigious 1997 Cannes Film Festival, and the city's most popular singer-actor, the late Leslie Cheung, publicly declared his homosexuality.

The period that followed saw the beginning of a thriving activist, media and urban queer culture. Tongzhi—translated to English as ‘comrade’—emerged to become the Chinese term for queer, and was quickly adopted by peers in the Mainland and across the queer Sinophone LGBT communities. To keep the capitalist spirit alive, the gay ghetto of Lan Kwai Fong, a street in the Central district now famous for elite dining and entertainment, continues to flourish with its high-end gay bars and clubs. LGBT activism has since joined the pro-democracy Umbrella Revolution and spawned new models of social movements.

Hong Kong has a long tradition of trans-embodiment, from the Peking opera genre of the 1960s and 1970s where female performers impersonate male roles, to the martial arts films of the 1980s and 1990s where transsexual swordsmen routinely display gender-bending supernatural fighting skills. Against this context, it is not surprising that in everyday life, FTM trans-embodiment is also a common practice visible in schools, workplaces and public spaces, and practiced by individuals across all age groups. The colloquial term for the embodied masculine woman is the boy-head. This phrase is derived its literal Cantonese term ‘nam chai tou’ (‘nam chai’ translates as ‘boy’; ‘tou’ translates as ‘head’). Like the Indonesian tomboy, it also begets a similarly to the alternative temporality of girlhood discussed earlier. As a compound word, the phrase signifies the action of putting the boy on and in the head. Through the act of putting on as an act of accessorising, and through the phrase’s connotation to external gender presentation, the boy-head is a signifier for trans-embodiment as a practice of self-fashioning the qualities and aesthetics of masculinity.

In her fieldwork of boy-heads in a few all-girl high schools, sociologist Carmen Tong (2008) shows how they, like the tomboy, actively embrace and adopt the cultural markers of masculinity. They refuse the compulsory school uniforms, participate in action sports such as basketball, wear sports bras, shirts, sweaters and baggy trousers, have short haircuts, talk loudly, smoke and use foul language. For the boy-heads, masculine attributes are associated with a “dressing style” and “appearance” (Tong 2008, pp. 104–118). Tong compares these characteristics by contrasting them with the proper femininity of ‘good’ girls who are hardworking, diligent, obedient, quiet, caring and gentle. Rather than juxtaposing boy-heads with the improper femininity of bad girls, Kam (2008) suggests boy-heads are recognised through a mis-recognition brought about by their embodiment of a hybrid female masculinity (Halberstam 1998) that challenges conventional adult femininity. Rather than seeing these attributes as cultural stereotypes accorded men and improper girls, these qualities and aesthetics perform the transgender as ‘the wrong body type’, and attempt to correct it through deportment, style and attire. When there is a mismatch between the inner self and the outer body, accessories such as dress, style, attitudes and aesthetics help craft out one’s self character by altering the body. As investments on the self, they are not dissimilar to the DIY-improvement project of the self-enterprising neoliberal subject as one who is always in the process of being made in national projects of human engineering. Rather than

conform to the top-down model of neoliberal self-fashioning, the same tactics of self-biography and individualisation are also used by boy-heads to fashion an alternative practice of life-making and a new identity.

Singapore: The Neoliberal Accumulation of Nightclub Butches

Unlike Indonesia and Hong Kong where homosexuality is legal, Singapore continues to enforce the Victorian Penal Code 377A that punishes homosexuality as an offence with an imprisonment of two years. Unlike Indonesia and Hong Kong where legal homosexuality has not been officially resourced with new infrastructure and support, Singapore's illegal homosexuality has been appropriated by the government to engineer a new creative economy (Yue 2012). In the past fifteen years, the loosening of state control through cultural liberalism has seen queer media and cultural production thrive in state-funded theatre, film, arts and nightlife. To replicate the 24/7 cycle of a successful creative nighttime economy, the state also subsidised shop rents in prime riverside tourist zones. Pink tourism and queer commerce flourished with its dance clubs, public parties, karaoke bars and saunas. Amongst this is the emergence of the nightclub butch culture that has instituted and made quotidian the figure of the butch.

Herstory and Two Queens are two events management companies that have become successful in the queer creative economy. Lesbian-owned and women-focused, they organise lesbian parties by hosting them in prominent mainstream nightclubs such as Zouk in Chinatown and Pangaea at the Marina Bay Sands. While Two Queens caters to all lifestyle groups with their diverse mix of low-key film screenings as well as high profile themed parties, Herstory organizes an annual 'Butch Hunt' competition that occupies most of the calendar year. In operation now for more than ten years, this event initiated, developed and established the country's distinct butch culture.

The butch hunt competition is similar to any other beauty pageant contests, staged across a few monthly rounds culminating in the grand finale. During the competition, embodied masculine women show off their skills (such as singing, kung fu, breakdancing and stand-up comedy) and walk the stage with various outfit changes. The winner, chosen from more than fifty to a hundred aspiring contestants, is crowned 'Butch of the Year'. Most of the contestants are between 19–22 in age. Not all of them are outwardly 'masculine'. Some refer to themselves as pretty boys, most have trendy hairstyles emulating K-pop stars, and very few flex their pectoral muscles. They wear hip-hop gear, smart suits and ties, leather shoes, cowboy shirts or just plain street wear. They come from all walks of life: university students, sales assistants, chefs, teachers and graphic designers. At each round of the competition, the nightclub (Zouk), with its four thousand plus patron capacity, is usually full. Tickets for the final night always sell out in advance yet hundreds more fans will still turn up and mingle by the riverfront outside the club.

The most distinct feature of this event on stage and off stage is the showing off of the flat-chest. For the performer, success in the competition is also judged by the aesthetics of the flat chest that is accentuated by tight sleeveless tank tops. In early years this physique was achieved with breast-binders. Where the older generation of the breast binder was made out of DIY elastic bands, bandages, duct tape or clear wraps, the new generation professionally manufactured breast binder is made from spandex and shape like Velcro-adjusted sports bras or t-shirts in assorted colours. Herstory organizers sell these binders at the events and on their websites. Recently, the surgical flat chest is the most sought after, usually revealed through an unbuttoned vest. Upon seeing these performers gyrating down the catwalk, spectators always scream in awe at the flat skin of the flesh.

For the general lesbian public, the breast binder has become a popular accessory in the last decade, especially with teenagers and young adults under the age of 30 as older butches tend to wear a normal bra and a t-shirt under their baggy shirt. Young butches wear the breast binder as part of everyday embodiment, under school uniforms and tight fitting t-shirts, developing a distinctive look in mainstream public culture, at the shopping malls, on the subway, in the streets, and regular lesbian venues and events. The competition has popularised the breast binder as the technology par excellence in the practice of 'doing butch' in Singapore (Yue 2012). It has liberated the butch's shame of the breast as a sign of failed masculinity and made visible a new young community who are proud and out.

While these practices of trans-embodiment follow the self-fashioning and body knowledge practices of the Indonesian tomboi and the Hong Kong boy-head, significant to note here is how economic neoliberal restructuring has created new institutional forms of the social and subcultural. From the business culture of the lesbian nightclubs to the active self-fashioning of young butches, self and group investments replicate the same logic of neoliberal flexible accumulation to reveal how economic reordering has also resulted in unexpected new alliances for sub-cultures to thrive from below (Ong 2006). In Singapore, neoliberal engineering has resulted in sexual democratising that has allowed lesbian entrepreneurs and young butches to work with and twist the illiberal logics of governmental control, and open up new ethics of queer survival in a country that refuses to recognise their claims to rights and identities.

Conclusion

This chapter began by showing how embodied modernity is a distinct formation in Asia as a space of rapid economic and social transitions, as well as a region with a high youth population in life-cycle transitions. It proposed that the queer Asian youthscape, with its new regional imaginary and alternative trajectories of life-making, is a site to contest these norms of structural and youth transitions. It illustrated these contestations using the film genre of the Chinese lesbian schoolgirl melodrama and the everyday trans-embodiments of young masculine women in

Indonesia, Hong Kong and Singapore. The former disrupted teleological reproductive time by celebrating the queer temporality of girlhood as a new site of same-sex intimacy; the latter disrupted the cisgendered body by celebrating the fluidity of female masculinities as diverse sexual identities. All practices worked within the same logic of flexible human capital accumulation that has marked the mainstream status of young people as embodied human capital, some through bending the bounds of body knowledge while others replicated their self-fashionings as economic resource. Rather than stay in the closet or assimilate into the straight mainstream, these practices carved out new ethics of life-making in a conservative region notorious for its hostility to deviant sexualities, making visible self-enterprising and self-empowering young LGBTs as agents of complicity and change. Using queer Asia as a method of analysis, and enriching the transitions paradigm with its trans-methods that focused on transnationality and transgenderism, this chapter has also shown how its new approach to knowledge-production can address the Western-centric teleological model of rights and liberation by presenting the disjunctive queer youth cultures of Asia as different to but equally as vibrant as those in the West.

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Broad Minds, Narrow Possibilities: The Embodiment of Gender

Jack Migdalek

Abstract Pervasive discourses of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and gender normativity impacted on ways in which I, as a male, learned to embody. Incessant policing/self-policing of any inclination I may have had to move in a feminine manner had a very real impact on my social and emotional well-being. Referring to ethnographic fieldwork with high school students, I argue that inherent ideologies regarding the execution and display of feminine and masculine embodiment continue to work, overtly and covertly, as definitive and restrictive barriers to the realm of possibilities of embodied gender expression and appreciation. In a neo-liberal climate in which it is proclaimed that individuals have agency to embody in any manner they choose, this chapter illuminates the forceful pressures on contemporary youth to conform to socially prescribed norms of embodiment that are specific to perceived biological sex and sexual orientation. In order to broaden notions of embodied possibilities of gender for all persons, and in order to safeguard the well-being of those whose embodied performance inclination is at odds with common contemporary norms of behaviour, this chapter argues the need to draw young people's critical attention to their own assumptions, positions, values, and attitudes concerning the embodiment of gender.

This chapter concerns ways in which youth come to perceive and perform the embodiment of gender. Embedded and inequitable gendered perceptions and practices relating to the embodiment of femininity and masculinity continue to prevail despite popular neo-liberal sentiments that individuals have the agency to embody gender in any way they choose. Pervasive discourses of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and gender normativity impacted on ways in which I, as a male, learned to embody. Incessant policing/self-policing of any inclination I may have had to move in a feminine manner had a very real impact on my social and emotional well-being. Referring to ethnographic fieldwork with high school students, I argue that, whilst some things have changed, ultimately many young people

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continue to be bound by conventions tied up with notions of embodied sexual orientation, that serve to delimit the range in which they are able to perceive the embodiment of others and, in turn, embody themselves.

This chapter questions the pressures on high school aged students to conform to socially prescribed norms of an embodiment that are specific to biological *sex*. Whilst I acknowledge the situations of those for whom dichotomous categories of male and female do not fit, I chose to restrict the parameters of this chapter to broad categories of male and female, as they are categories by which so many individuals, particularly school children, continue to be defined and/or define themselves.

The chapter commences with an overview of the literature that engages with notions of physical capital, habitus, taste, embodiment, and gender. Through reflection on fieldwork in a particular urban Australian high school site (within what had been a larger set of education sites), I concern myself with gendered and inequitable ways that youth respond to, read, and execute embodied performances that are transgressive of common culturally promoted norms of gender—particularly male—embodiment. I relate what students espoused publicly, how they handled a practical workshop, and what they divulged anonymously, to claims that contemporary youth are open to gender and sexual diversity in schools (see Anderson 2011; McCormack 2012). The chapter concludes with arguments for social change and the achieving of more equitable attitudes to the spectrum of possibilities of gender embodiment.

Theorising the Embodiment of Gender

The value and worth of certain forms of embodiment, as performed by male or female forms, are promoted and valorised through mainstream popular and everyday culture, just as other forms of embodiment are devalued as subordinate (see Wex 1979; Russo 1981; Butler 1993; Jones 2012; Neimes 2012). Those who pose or act in ways that transgress social norms of gender behaviour ascribed to biological sex are regarded as being combinations of odd, comic, ludicrous, subordinate, deviant (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005; Monro 2005). Despite some views to the contrary—which will be explored later in the chapter—dominant ideologies that valorise masculine embodiment for males and feminine embodiment for females are also upheld within social systems such as schools (Kehily 2001; Kirk 2002; Martino and Beckett 2004; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005; Swain 2005; Paechter 2006; Pascoe 2007). These values can affect how students come to or strive to operate both within and beyond school sites and contexts.

Assumptions that are made about an individual's personality, character and sexual orientation frequently hinge on the manner in which a person embodies. The individual who opposes or deviates from ideological norms of gender behaviour may be at risk of marginalisation and/or discrimination (see Connell 1999; Plummer 1999; Renold 2003; Drummond 2005a; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005; Monro 2005; Paechter 2007; Pascoe 2007; Kosciw et al. 2014). The findings

of Kehily (2002), Hillier et al. (2005), and Epstein and Johnson (2008) are that for boys in school, the fear of being called ‘gay’ or ‘sissy’ acts as a disciplinary technique regulating male behavior and embodied social practices. Being classified in such ways can disempower, marginalise, and affect the self-image and self-esteem of those not inclined to embody in gender normative and heteronormative ways (Migdalek 2014a).

Although consequences and anxieties around transgressions of norms of gender embodiment may vary for those who present as male or female, it can be argued that dichotomous sensibilities of what is *normal* or *appropriate* embodiment for each serve to promote and sustain what can be termed ‘embodied gender inequity’ (Migdalek 2009, 2015). To illustrate, the individual who projects as male and embodies in a feminine manner is likely to be perceived and treated differently to the individual who projects as female and embodies in the same manner. It is inequitable that the style of one’s embodied expression leads to being perceived or treated differently simply as a result of one’s apparent biological sex. It is not just students but whole school cultures that are caught up in inequitable codes that value differential deportment for schoolboys and schoolgirls (see Kamler et al. 1994). For example, the schoolgirl sitting with legs straddled is not generally accepted or tolerated in the same way as the schoolboy sitting in the same manner is.

Taking Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital (1977), wherein individuals are valued according to competence in various social settings (social fields), Chris Shilling speaks of ‘physical capital’ (2003), where the physical body itself is the bearer of value in society. Just as certain embodiment may be highly valued, resulting in physical capital, other lesser valued embodiment may result in physical poverty. If certain masculinities and femininities—projected via male and female bodies respectively—project as heterosexual and normal (heteronormative), and if heteronormativity is valued (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005; Vicars 2008), then it follows that other embodiment, such as the schoolboy sitting with legs crossed in a graceful, arguably ‘gay’ manner, may project as abnormal, ludicrous, and valueless (see Monro 2005). The physical capital of a male high school student taking space and using large, expansive, powerful movements is higher than that of the male student whose embodiment is soft or delicate (see Burt 1995; Gorely et al. 2003; Drummond 2005b).

Where learning is not formal or technical, a learner’s principal agent is a model used for imitation (Hall 1959). Popular entertainment—dominated by US media—circulate dichotomous gender images that define notions of masculinity and femininity (Connell 1999; see also Reynold 2003). Frequently in mainstream film and television, male characters that are successful, popular and powerful, embody in a masculine manner, just as female characters that are deemed to be attractive and desirable, embody in a feminine manner. These kinds of embodiment on male or female bodies are privileged if not revered. On the other hand, male characters who embody in a feminine manner—such as Mr G in ‘Summer Heights High’ (Princess Pictures), and female characters who embody in a masculine manner, such as Sue Sylvester in ‘Glee’ (Fox)—are perceived as both objects of humour and as

homosexual—or homosexually inclined—(Russo 1981). Prevailing models such as these can affect how students see themselves as well as how they aspire—and do not aspire—to project from day to day in school and other sites (Migdalek 2015). Just as prevalent images of slender and glamorised females can be oppressive to females who do not meet such ideals (Bordo 1993), prevalent images such as those of hypermasculine men can be oppressive to the sense of identity and self worth of males not inclined to embody in a masculine manner (Drummond 2005b; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005). This is especially the case where there are a lack of models that project as acceptable alternative possibilities. Although many Western societies are made up of diverse and pluralistic groups, recurring exposure to particular valorised or trivialised embodied expressions of gender, serve to reinforce the gendered status quo, leaving little discursive space for alternative readings (Migdalek 2015).

Cultural theorist Angela McRobbie (2009) is critical of neo-liberal concepts that describe the individual as a competent actor whose choices and decisions might be freely made (see Thorsen 2009). She dismisses the ‘*you can do anything*’ line concerning what we do and how we act, and argues that individual choice and agency are very much framed and regulated by cultural boundaries and influences. These arguments can be applied to individual agency regarding the embodiment of gender. Whilst all able bodied persons are capable of moving delicately as well as powerfully, what delimits our bodies are states of mind and taste that become so habitual that their machinations are fundamentally invisible (Turner 1992; Shilling 2003). It follows that the plethora of media and everyday inequitable embodied performances of gender that surround us, exert an influence on the perceptions and mindset that both students and educators bring into school sites. McRobbie (2009) argues that even though we may feel that our perceptions are authentic and essential to who we are, they are very much dependent on the force of externally promoted cultural subjectivities. These subjectivities, so often steeped in inequitable patriarchal hierarchies of gender, wield significant influence on ways in which individuals might choose, be inspired, or come to embody. As such, agency does not necessarily denote autonomy (Migdalek 2014b).

A concern here is whether and to what extent we are aware of the impacts of ideologies on our perceptions and practices. Patriarchal, heteronormative, and gender normative notions of appropriate embodiment for male and female bodies can be so deeply embedded that inequitable and restrictive ways that individuals come to regard and do embodiment become habitual. Bourdieu theorises about ‘*habitus*’ as non-consciously performed practices “... internalised as second nature and so forgotten” (1990, p. 56). In a similar vein, Butler (1990) theorises gender performativity wherein who we are is formed on the congealing of repeated gendered stylisation of the body. Masculinising grounding in the rearing of boys and feminising grounding in the rearing of girls that pressure boys and girls to measure up to hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity, result in body-reflexive practices (Connell 1983, 1995) that operate at a level of subconsciousness. In professional development sessions that I conducted, educators expressed their frustrations at boys’ and girls’ resistance to moving in non-gender normative ways

as they grow older. They bemoaned their students' differential understandings of embodiment deemed appropriate to male bodies or female bodies, and student groups' aversive responses toward deviations of the same (Migdalek 2013). Students, as subjects of school and other cultures, are not likely to be aware of the machinations of their enculturation, nor their own habitual and hard-to-disrupt orientations toward embodiment. These orientations can be regarded as modes of taste, as a manifestation of habitus, that are produced and cultivated by social conditions (Bourdieu 1984, 1990; Turner 1992; Shilling 2003).

Pressure to conform to dominant norms of sex specific behaviour can impact negatively on the social and emotional well-being of those inclined to perform otherwise (Plummer 1999; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005; Monro 2005; Martino 2014; see also Connell 1999; Drummond 2005a). Within school cultures, fears of being marginalised can lead students to tow the hegemonic line and resist transgressing prescribed norms of embodiment, regardless of how they may be inclined to embody. Whilst suppressing and performing against one's embodied inclination may well protect the individual from bullying or marginalisation, it is also likely to affect that person's sense of self. Individuals, who are made to feel that they do not fit the heteronormative bill, will either resist and be marginalised resulting in social alienation (and perhaps harassment), or they will self-police and embody masculinity/femininity as socially prescribed for their biological sex in an endeavour to 'pass'. Passing (Kroeger 2003) is the ability to successfully imitate and replicate socially normative behaviours as a way of getting along in social environments or settings that would otherwise exclude, marginalise, or discriminate against the passer. Whereas 'passing' may assist individuals to avoid conflict, danger, prejudice, discrimination or rejection, it may also cause depression, hostility, anxiety and low self-esteem (Kroeger 2003).

Fitting the Gendernormative Bill

Sociologist Mark McCormack (2012) contends that a decrease in negative attitudes toward homosexuality, as well as a decrease in homophobia—being the cultural fear of being homosexualised (Anderson 2009)—has led to a greater acceptance of gender and sexual diversity in schools. The thrust of his argument is that as a result of broad social changes regarding sexuality and gender, boys no longer care about being socially perceived as gay (see also Anderson 2011). Through his data which emanated from observations as well as conversations and semi-structured interviews with male students in three UK high schools, McCormack claims that young males are now able to act in feminine ways without fear of being homosexualised. Whilst in forum of public discussion, the outcomes of my fieldwork in Australian high schools indicate a similar tendency, what emerged through anonymous response sheets as well as how students handled a practical workshop activity, stand in contradiction to McCormack's claims. Although McCormack (2012) contends that we are witnessing an expansion of gendered behaviours for males, my

fieldwork indicates that this is not so in regard to *embodied* forms of such behaviours. Perhaps a discrepancy between our fieldwork results is due to cultural differences between the school sites in which we both conducted fieldwork. Or it may be as a result of my fieldwork giving students the opportunity to respond to issues anonymously, something McCormack's fieldwork did not.

The fieldwork to which I refer in this chapter took place in a middle class inner city public high school in Melbourne, Australia. This was one of a larger sample group of education sites (see Migdalek 2015). My visit to the school consisted of the presentation of a solo physical theatre performance, a follow on discussion, a practical workshop, and the filling in of anonymous response sheets. The group consisted of 40 students aged 15 and 16, from a broad range of cultural backgrounds. Students' countries of origin included Australia, Vietnam, Fiji, China, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Italy, Greece, Lebanon, Philippines, Somalia and Albania. This student group comprised of a Year 10 Dance class (14 girls and 6 boys) combined with a year 10 Physical Education class (15 boys and 5 girls). On the whole I found that the range of responses to issues of gender and embodiment that were expressed within the group could not be ascribed to any single category of students. For these reasons I will only state the biological sex or nationality of any individual student where I feel these points of difference are noteworthy.

The performance I staged for the students was a solo physical theatre piece that I titled '*Gender Icons*'. I performed it to the accompaniment of an 11 min sound collage that combined music excerpts which, from my cultural point of view, projected as distinctively feminine or masculine. During the piece, I moved and danced my male body across a broad range of masculine and feminine styles of embodiment, counter-pointing feminine and masculine modes of dance with feminine and masculine modes of everyday actions such as eating, sitting, walking. I said little prior to my performance of '*Gender Icons*', other than that I was doing a study on the body, performance, and gender, and that I was interested in hearing students' responses to the physical theatre piece and any issues it might raise for them.

Although I was aware of only a handful of students sniggering during the performance, many students commented in anonymous response sheets on how humorous they found some of the movements performed in the piece, ascribing this "to the fact that they were done by a man". The staged performance led students to also comment on performances of gender in the everyday, and interconnections between individuals' perceptions and their upbringing or enculturation: "Media and the way we are brought up ... is what impacts on how we see certain movements"; "Culturally we are taught that certain movements should only be done by a certain gender". A Zimbabwean student commented that "Others from backgrounds like my own will see the performance as unnatural, as I suppose a violation of cultural norms...". This comment indicates an understanding that notions of what is natural and normal are contingent on one's upbringing or culture.

One student put forward the prospect that there need not be an impenetrable divide between masculine and feminine: "It doesn't have to be always 'this is masculine, this is feminine'. There are things that blur between the lines and it

should be like that". This student was condoning a continuum of sorts, where an individual might operate and shift between cultural and gender extremes/polarities and not have to feel the need to behave one way or the other.

A view put forward in the group discussion initially by one male student, was that individuals should not care about how others regard them: "You've got to not care what people think". I followed this by asking "How many people don't really care what people think?" In response, around 50 % of the group put their hands up, indicating to me that these students would themselves be tolerant and accepting of alternative behaviours. It impressed me that the strength with which this view was put forward could be encouraging to those within the group who may feel conscious of how their behaviour is perceived by others. However, I found that what appeared to be an accepting school culture was at odds with anxieties expressed by students in anonymous response sheets in which many stated that they would not move in ways that transgressed gender norms: "I don't want people to laugh at me". One male student who remarked "I will never dance like you did, no offence", makes it clear that for him, moving in a feminine manner was definitely not an option. Other students expressed hardline readings of gender performance: "If a woman moves in a masculine way they must be a lesbian or frigid... When a male moves in female way he must be gay or lacking". This was in stark contrast to the previously verbalised liberal and accepting position,—articulated publicly before teachers and fellow students—, that people should be free to embody gender in any way at all.

Despite the *liberal and accepting* attitude promoted in the group discussion, many students used terminology that positioned masculine and feminine as binary opposites suited to male bodies or female bodies respectively. Students' use of linguistic descriptors such as '*girlie*' and '*manly*', also reinforced connections between notions of masculine and feminine with biological sex. Whilst it is admirable that the school's dance teacher had generated male interest in dance within the school, she bemoaned having been forced to choreograph "boy alternatives" for her male students as a result of their refusal to do particular types of dance steps; that they would only replicate *cool* male dance as seen in pop videos and the media. She spoke of her male students' aversive responses on viewing non-gender normative choreography when she screened excerpts of DV8 Physical Theatre's *Enter Achilles* (produced by BBC). Responding to the strongly expressed view that people should not care what others think of how they move (as articulated in the group discussion), the dance teacher questioned the boys as to why they objected to performing certain "hippy movements" that she had tried to teach them in class. They could not articulate why, but their parodic demonstrations of the movements to which she was referring made clear the disdain in which they regarded this type of motion when performed by a male body. It is concerning that what comes to feel comfortable for these males to do—or dance—is so powerful that it limits their potential to do or dance alternative options. Although they may think themselves open to embodying in ways that might be transgressive of gender norms, this may not be the case in practice.

The focus of discussion predominantly fixed on transgressive embodiment of gender for males as opposed to females. This may have been because my performance piece was executed by a male body, or perhaps, as argued by Paechter

(2003), because the denigration and social risk for males who transgress norms of gender embodiment are more of a contemporary issue than that for females who do the same. Views expressed across students' response sheets and also in discussion overwhelmingly associated male transgressive gender embodiment with homosexuality. Although students acknowledged that not all gay men embody in a feminine manner, for the most part they demonstrated a mindset that males who move in a feminine manner must be homosexual. When students spoke of the way that Ricky Martin moves his hips when dancing, one male explained this by offering "Isn't he gay or something?" The dogma by which this association was made is that straight men would not move in such ways. Comments on anonymous response sheets revealed that students would not embody in gender transgressive ways for fear that others might think that they were gay, and that they were scared of getting picked on or laughed at as a result. These responses make it clear that in the school culture in question, homosexuality is not on a par with heterosexuality. Anonymously expressed comments were very much at odds with the previously described public declarations that people should be free to embody gender in any way at all. Clearly there were students in the group who did not take comfort in such rhetoric.

My observations during the ensuing workshop activity with the group also indicate a contradiction between what students espoused publicly and what the group as a whole was able to practice. In the workshop activity, female students were to work as choreographers. Working in smaller groups, they were given the challenge of creating a dance sequence for the males in their groups to perform: that was feminine in manner; that would be aesthetic; and be received favourably by mainstream viewers. Whilst there was much laughter and apparent good will in the room as female choreographers created and taught their male counterparts short sequences that mostly involved swaying of hips, wafting arms, and limp wrists, it was clear that moving in feminine ways was uncomfortable, embarrassing, or a source of amusement for the males concerned: they laughed or groaned as their female choreographers showed them steps to perform; they held back physically from accurately reproducing steps that they were taught; they stood with hands in pockets until prodded by their female choreographers to *do* the steps they were being taught; they added parodic embellishments such as pouting lips and/or vocalised flourishes that mocked the choreography that they were executing (Migdalek 2013, 2015). My impression was that the males in the group did indeed care how they projected and about how others regarded them, even in the context of a staged or 'unreal' performance for the stage.

In handling the task of choreographing the boys, the girls too did not work in the spirit that individuals should be able to embody freely. Their peals of laughter denoted a boorish pleasure at challenging their male choreographic subjects to tackle steps that they put together for them to execute, enforcing notions that males moving in a feminine manner were incongruous and ludicrous. There was a clear contradiction between what the students could articulate rationally or cerebrally about embodied gender equity, and how they could actually engage with embodied performance that did not match prescribed norms of gender behaviour. Male and female

audience members whooping for their male classmates moving in a feminine manner before them made clear that—despite earlier expressed sentiments—the male moving in a feminine manner continues to be positioned as an object of amusement. There was no sense that the dance sequences created were actually aesthetic as executed by a male body, despite this having been the challenge of the task.

In reference to Gard's (2004) theories of critical reflection on embodiment, I attempted to use the experience of the practical workshop as a vehicle to encourage contemplation on why it may have felt good or bad to move in certain ways; why people don't more readily break out of corporeal expectations that hinge on biological sex; how ways in which we move may be influenced by a consciousness of how our performances are perceived by others. I mentioned how I thought that for male students, the workshop task might not have been easy to execute. One male student argued that performing the task did not worry him. He contended that he did not care about how he projected to others ("I don't care what people think"), even though from my perspective of how he held back in the performance of the choreography he had been given, he very clearly did care. My impression was that the extent to which males in the group were willing to enter into embodied expression that was transgressive of socially prescribed norms was marred by a strong sense of self-consciousness that hinged on the embodiment of gender. It struck me that the influence of deep-seated attitudes toward transgressive embodied performances of gender within the school culture prevented these high school boys and girls from engaging with the problem solving task that I had set in a way that was earnest and without inhibition.

As students left the studio, many of them complemented and thanked me for my performance. My sense was that they thought me brave and courageous to have performed before them in ways that I did, as summarised in the following comment on one of the response sheets: "It was a good performance and a good show of confidence and a very good attitude towards people who would judge your body because you don't care". For these students, transgressing norms of gender embodiment—even if admirable—takes courage and the overcoming of anxiety of how others might regard you. Comparing students' spoken responses with their anonymous written responses as well as how students executed the practical work shop activity, indicate that—at this stage—there is a dissonance between reasoning/rationalising/knowning and acting out/behaving/doing. This may be because whilst it is possible to reason and hold ideals on embodied gender equity, effecting adjustments to one's actual and habitual everyday physical modes of expression does not occur simply as a result of intellectual motivation (Shilling 2003).

Change

Paulo Freire (1990) contends that processes of education frequently integrate the younger generation into the logic of present systems. However, he goes on to reason that processes of education can also lead the young to critically and actively

engage in acts of transformation and change to their worlds. Schools have the potential as sites that promote multiple embodiments of gender rather than rigid binary ‘either-or’ categorisations of masculine and feminine. Critical literacy work—as influenced by feminism, queer theory and men’s studies—has been proposed as a means of exposing narrow and often oppressive definitions of what it is to be female and male (Butler 1990; Mellor et al. 1991; Martino and Mellor 1995). The principles of critical literacy—frequently used to expose inherent ideologies in *verbal* text (story, speech, writing) can be used in schools and schooling to expose inherent ideologies in embodied text. Affecting social transformation or corporeal change toward *embodied* gender equity necessitates turning a mirror onto the machinations behind corporeal courses as assigned by one’s social location, habitus and taste (see Shilling 2003).

Practical performance-arts based experiences involving exploration and play are a powerful form of human discourse that can lead people to see themselves in new ways (Sinclair et al. 2009). Practical experience—such as could be had in the drama classroom—can serve to shed light on lived and embodied practice, thus opening possibilities for understanding, appreciating, and even disrupting one’s own habituated practices (Threadgold 2005). Where something is staged or explored within a practical workshop, it can be seen to allow the participant licence and freedom to transgress norms of behaviour, albeit temporarily. Martino (2014) contends however, that challenging heteronormativity through the deployment of non-normative gender possibilities in the classroom, does not necessarily guarantee deconstructive reimagining of such possibilities. It is sobering to reflect that the outcomes of the fieldwork described in this chapter—whilst productive on a rational level—reinforced gendered codes of embodiment through the trivialisation of other possibilities in practice. Reflecting on how students handled the workshop activity, I argue that it is vital to foster an atmosphere in which students feel confident to explore or play without risk of being ridiculed, squealed at, or losing face. It needs to be borne in mind that material being explored in workshops that deal with embodied gender inequity may be more challenging to students’ core sense of self than might other forms of roleplay or embodied exploration.

For positive social change to occur in school sites, it needs to be acknowledged that educators themselves also frequently reinforce normalised codes of gender performance. Sometimes, without even realising it, educators’ actions denigrate and valorise particular gender behaviors that differ according to biological sex. For example the casting, direction and choreography of school productions, and/or encouragement of students in the pursuit of particular sporting and other physical activities frequently reflect and promote heteronormal modes of embodiment. In order to make school environments more gender equitable there is a need for self-reflexive professional development, in which educators learn to question their own routine assumptions, positions, values, and attitudes concerning gender (Ollis 2008).

Conclusion

It has become more socially acceptable—and not particularly remarkable—for females to display what are deemed to be masculine qualities (such as aggression and assertiveness) in their personality and character, and for males to display feminine qualities (such as sensitivity, sentimentality, and gentleness). However, when it comes to embodiment, embedded notions regarding normative behaviour continue to denigrate ‘other’ possibilities of embodied gender expression, particularly for males. Whilst it is fair to argue that “when a culture is no longer homophobic, there will be a marked expansion in the range of permissible behaviours for boys and men” (McCormack 2012, p. 46), it is another thing to claim that schools are no longer homophobic when it comes to males embodying in a feminine manner. Unlike McCormack’s (2012) findings, my findings indicate that performances of masculinity that do not align with notions of heterosexuality continue to be subordinate to those that do.

In a neo-liberal climate in which it is popular to proclaim that individuals have agency to embody in any manner they choose, this chapter illuminates the forceful pressures on contemporary youth to conform to socially prescribed norms of embodiment that are specific to perceived biological sex and sexual orientation. Students referred to in this chapter, connect certain styles of gender embodiment with cultural capital, physical capital, and sexual orientation. Personal fears and disquiet expressed in anonymous response sheets, as well as the ways in which they conducted themselves in the workshop activity, demonstrate that the fears and anxieties pertinent to the embodiment of gender that touched me in my youth, are still relevant to high school aged youth of today. In contexts such as the high school described in this chapter, embodiment of gender that transgresses norms of embodiment for males in particular can still be a risky undertaking. My concerns are not only for the well-being of the individual whose embodiment of gender is transgressive and leads to marginalisation, but also for the well-being of the individual who through incessant self regulation and conformity is likely to suffer a loss of sense of self.

The outcomes of the fieldwork on which this chapter is based indicate that within school cultures, social change is not just a matter of virtual knowing. What people think or know on a cognitive level is not necessarily akin to what they do impulsively or habitually. Differences between what may be understood through thinking or saying, and what is understood through being performed and embodied, need to be raised in order to affect practical and equitable social and cultural change regarding the embodied performance of gender. This self-reflexive work hinges on recognition of the invisible workings of habitus on inequitable ways in which we *view* and *do* the embodiment of gender.

It is not my contention that we should all embody in gender-neutral ways. Rather what needs to be addressed is why performing in ways that are not gender normative cause social disadvantage to the performer. With the social and emotional well-being of contemporary youth in mind, I argue for a broadening of embodied

performance possibilities of gender that goes beyond the current limited and restrictive range of what should otherwise be a continuum of embodied possibilities. Drama, dance and physical education activities particularly can serve as avenues through which educators might endeavour to draw young people's critical attention to embodied gender inequities that continue to abound. This work is crucial if we are to promote respect for diversity as prescribed in staff and student codes of conduct (see for examples Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria 2014; Drama Australia Equity and Diversity Guidelines 2015).

The chapter is written with the hope that schools can be sites in which embodied gender inequities may be challenged and deconstructed. For this to be possible these sites need to be environments that foster and practice respect for that which differs from the norm not only in theory, but in practical terms too.

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Steeling the Junior Body: Learning Sport and Masculinities in the Early Years

Deevia Bhana

Abstract Of what significance is the body in the learning of masculinities amongst eight and nine year old South African boys? By drawing on elements of an empirical-based study of gender in the early years of schooling, this chapter illustrates the central role that the body plays in the learning of junior masculinities. By focusing on sport, the chapter illustrates the embodiment of junior masculinities and the social processes through which this embodiment is negotiated. In doing so it seeks to expand the “exemplary status” (Connell in *Masculinities*. Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, p. 30, 2005) of sport in the steeling of junior bodies and the gendered effects. The chapter argues that sport is an embodiment of and opportunity for learning to become a boy. The chapter focuses on the interacting forces of boys, bodies and sport in two socially distinct settings in South Africa. The chapter elaborates upon boys’ investments in muscular power, physical skills and sporty postures as key to the signification of masculinity. Fitness, physical pain and strength, as the boys in this study indicate are key to steeling, shaping and sexualising a successful junior body. The chapter also shows how social processes inform the embodiment of sport where steeling the body is key to economic success and imagining a life out of poverty especially for boys located in conditions of socio-economic deprivation. The sporty body is thus an important resource not only to signify successful masculinities but through which class inequalities can be challenged. Boys’ developing relationship with sport operates as a strategic means to establish status and prestige and through which gender relations and inequalities are produced. The chapter concludes by arguing that attention to the manifestation of gender inequalities in the early years of schooling requires a focus on boys, bodies and sport embedded within and intertwined by complex social processes.

Of what significance is the body in the learning of masculinities amongst seven and nine year old South African boys? By drawing on elements of an empirical-based study of gender in the early years of schooling, this chapter illustrates the central

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role that the body plays in the learning of junior masculinities. By focusing on sport, the chapter illustrates the embodiment of junior masculinities and the social processes through which this embodiment is negotiated. In doing so it seeks to expand the “exemplary status” (Connell 2005, p. 30) of sport in the steeling of junior bodies and the gendered effects. The chapter argues that sport is an embodiment of, and opportunity for, learning to become a boy. The chapter focuses on the interacting forces of boys, bodies and sport in two socially distinct settings in South Africa. The chapter elaborates upon boys’ investments in muscular power, physical skills and sporty postures as key to the signification of masculinity. Fitness, physical pain and strength, as the boys in this study indicate are key to steeling, shaping and sexualising a successful junior body. The chapter also shows how social processes inform the embodiment of sport where steeling the body is key to economic success and imagining a life out of poverty especially for boys located in conditions of socio-economic deprivation. The sporty body is thus an important resource not only to signify successful masculinities but through which class inequalities can be challenged. Boys’ developing relationship with sport operates as a strategic means to establish status and prestige and through which gender relations and inequalities are produced. The chapter concludes by arguing that attention to the manifestation of gender inequalities in the early years of schooling requires a focus on boys, bodies and sport embedded within and intertwined by complex social processes.

Daniel I’ve got weights at my house and every time I do twenty. Every night and every morning I do twenty... [Focus group discussion, Daniel, aged 8, Bullwood Primary]

Boysie ... Soccer is nice. It makes you fit...

Khetso When you have muscles you can hit and they [muscles] help you fight... [Focus group discussion, Boysie, aged 8 and Khetso, aged 7, KwaDabeka Primary]

Of what significance is the body in the learning of young masculinities? Swain (2003) suggests that boys are bodies and bodies are a key yardstick of masculinities (Hauge and Haavind 2011; Renold 2005; Paechter 2006; Kehily 2015; Epstein et al. 2001, Skelton 1997). How do seven and eight year old boys use their bodies to express masculinities? What are the social processes through which the young masculine body is negotiated and constituted? Examining the significance of the body in the construction of junior masculinities, this chapter focuses on the body as it intersects with masculinity and underlying dynamics of gender inequalities.

The chapter begins with Daniel, Boysie and Khetso. They, like the rest of the boys in this study, are in grade two and located in two socially differentiated school contexts in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal. As they engage in boy talk, they foreground the junior body’s capacity by investing in male power. The body as Swain (2006, p. 4) suggests is critical to identity formation and “making and becoming a body also involves the project of making the self”. Daniel, Boysie and Khetso invest in muscularity, sport and fitness. Bodily strength and power, status,

skill, aggression, sexuality and violence are often considered to be formulations for the successful expression of masculinity (Kimmel et al. 2005; Keddle 2003). The boys as the transcripts above illustrate are learning to perform appropriate masculinities by emphasising and investing in skills associated with master male builders—rigorous weight training, soccer, fitness and domination over others.

It is thus not incidental that boys' talk is also 'body talk' and 'sports talk' culminating in the deployment of power. The manner in which the junior body is talked about, performed, stylised, steeled and skilled is an attempt to produce a 'real boy' and a significant means to construct a masculine identity (Renold 2005; Swain 2003). Boys' investment in and engagement with the body is centrally about identity. It is argued in this chapter that the steeling of the body is one important way of claiming to be 'real boys' and critical to the social construction of young masculinities. Bodies however, are not simply biological 'steemed' tools to express power. They have material effects and are socially produced (Swain 2003; Paechter 2006; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Becoming a boy is also about becoming a particular kind of body- they are inseparable. By sharpening the focus of the ways in which the body intersects with masculinity, I suggest that particular masculinised configuration of the gendered body are located within and influenced by the social context of class, race, gender and sexuality which makes some versions of the masculine body possible. This contextual configuration in the embodiment of and opportunity for learning bodies of self and others is of importance in the social constitution of masculinities.

The focus on junior bodies and boys is not one that is sufficiently explored (Drummond and Drummond 2014; Drummond 2012). Whilst research with junior boys and masculinities in the primary school are increasing, the focus on the body remains understudied (Renold 2005; Skelton 2001; Swain 2006; Drummond 2014). Like Paechter (2006), Hauge and Haavind (2011) and Allen (2013) suggest that in school contexts bodies are subsumed under the rubric of academic work where the body matters primarily only in relation to academic learning and the pursuit of intellectual achievement. Noting the absence of the body in schools, Paechter (2006) argues that there is need for much more research that takes into account the specific ways in which children's bodies are central to embodiment of subjectivity.

In primary school settings, the body is especially evident when bodies play and children are seen to be both playful and learning bodies (Bhana 2013; Thorne 1993; Connolly 2004). An overwhelming categorisation of children in the early years of schooling is the notion of childhood innocence where matters around gender (and sexuality) are subsumed (Bhana 2013, 2015). Childhood innocence functions to place children in age and stage categories of development where not only are issues of gender of marginal consideration, but the body remains only significant in relation to learning, playfulness and innocence (Drummond 2014; Bhana 2015). The body is not missing—it is simply not seen under the rubric of dominant notions of childhood innocence where gender is of abstract value. In Swain's (2006) study of three primary schools in the UK, he suggested that boys use their bodies to

'become somebody,' showing the interactions between body, masculinity and social positioning. Drummond's study of boys between the ages of 5 and 13 years suggests that from the early ages, gender is embodied and boys are actively constructing their bodies. In part, their bodies enable them to construct masculinities through their own awareness of the power but also in relation to others. As Paechter (2006, p. 132) notes:

If we are to understand how children learn and construct masculinities and femininities in school and other contexts, we need to have a radical reconception of the gendered body in which the body takes a full share of our attention... We cannot perceive or conceive of bodies except through cultural norms and understandings, but nor should we consider gender except as something that is fundamentally and always involves bodies. This means ... we need to treat research participants, particularly children, as embodied beings, whose bodies are deeply implicated in their identity, behaviour and gender/race/class understandings and performances...

The chapter will focus on the ways in boys, both white and black, in different social contexts use the body as a key signifier of masculinity and thus draw attention to the body as a site for the active construction of gender, race, class and sexuality (Mac and Ghaill 1994). At *KwaDabeka*, attention is given to the ways in which boys talk about the body as a steeled fortress of defence by positioning themselves within broader gendered landscape of male power and aggression. Boys also see sport as key to social mobility. Arising from conditions of poverty, the chapter will delineate the ways in which sport, the body and the muscles are associated with prospects of fame and fortune against the grinding poverty of *KwaDabeka*.

At Bullwood, the process of becoming a body requires mastery, rigour and sporting prowess as well as skills interacting with the sporting cultural capital evident amongst middle class white South Africans (Bhana 2008). The body is also steeled in relation to sexuality through which underlying gender relations of power and inequalities are examined. Boys' negotiation of and investment in the body is acknowledged as key to the masculinising processes in their specific contexts. Thus, the body is produced at the intersection of masculinity, race, class and sexuality. Different boys in different context produce different bodies, different masculinities and different ways of becoming a boy.

From such a viewpoint, boys' bodies become the basis for differentiation with regard to the many ways of being and becoming...and it is through the acquisition of some bodies or some capacities that certain masculinities become possible (Hauge and Haavind 2011, p. 14).

Young boys and bodies are missing and marginalised in the current work on masculinities in South Africa (Bhana 2005; Morrell 2001). This chapter goes some way towards examining young boys' developing relationships with their bodies in the intersection of masculinity and social differences, demonstrating how young bodies are made possible through the interactions with social contexts. An overarching concern is the ways in which boys' investment and developing relationship with their bodies and others produces relations of domination and subordination.

Context and Method

The boys in this study emerge from two very different primary school settings- one wealthy, white and middle class, the other impoverished and all African, a testament to the legacy of Apartheid and dividing the community along widespread racial and class inequalities.

The first school, Bullwood, is located in a rich residential area of Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal province. Surrounded by palatial homes and largely white, the conditions within the school are excellent. The children have a wide array of extracurricular activities such as swimming, judo, karate and ballet. In stark contrast, at *KwaDabeka* the children rely on the school's meal support scheme, which at times is their only hot meal of the day. Soccer is played on the playground, reflecting the wider community attachment and love of the game.

The study takes place against this backdrop of continuing inequality and in which sport plays a significant part (Bhana 2008). As already demonstrated, sport is highly racialised, with participation in soccer on the one hand and cricket, rugby and swimming on the other reflecting a nation divided in race and class lines. Despite changes to class contexts and efforts to shift the racial profiling of sport, both white and African boys continue to be inducted into sporting rituals that reflect this racialised reality.

The data from this chapter draws from an ethnographic and interview based study of gender, sexuality and AIDS education (Bhana 2016). My intention in this project was to understand the ways in which children give meaning to the disease and the processes through which gender and sexuality are foregrounded. The methods included observations, interviews and focus group discussions which took place in various locations around the school, such as the classroom, playground and as they moved from classroom to classroom. In following the children, who were at that time in grade two, I was able to get an insider view of their social worlds and speak with them as they engaged in different types of conversations.

In this paper I draw on what emerged as I sat with boys both in and out of the classroom, where the issue of sport and physical activities was brought to the agenda by boys themselves. I did not deliberately set out to do this, but I became aware of how bodies, masculinities and sport was key to the everyday life for boys in different ways. Like Thorne (1993), I noticed how boys, especially with great speed and delight, focused on movement, body and power. As Connell (2005) argues, sport is key to hegemonic masculinity and in presenting a coherent masculinity for young boys, premised upon and linked to body and muscularity.

At *KwaDabeka*, where isiZulu is the mother tongue, (with some familiarity with English) the tone of the conversations were much more formal than the chatty conversations I had at Bullwood where English is the main language. Boys were enthusiastic about demonstrating how their junior bodies performed and would often show me their developing muscles. This is will now be the focus for the rest of the chapter.

Learning to Steel the Body

KwaDabeka

Being Tough and Hard

Bodies bring agency to boys. Such agency is negotiated and mediated against the social context and the capability of the body. Living in the crucible of economic hardship and misery, and everyday patterns of violence (Bhana 2015), the boys highlighted a defending masculinity (Hauge and Haavind 2011) based on being and becoming tough and hard:

- Khetso When you are fit and somebody hits you, you don't feel the pain. You feel the pain a little but not as bad as other the other one.
- Researcher Do you want to be fit to hit?
- Boysie No I don't like fighting but I want to defend myself when others fight, those "*izigebengu*" (robber).

In the context of everyday crime and violence at *KwaDabeka*, the defending body emerges as constant point of discussion, a tool that can be used to mediate violence, power and domination. The boys have learnt that the junior body can be steeled and deployed, in defending against '*izigebengu*'. A defending masculinity evokes feelings of power and a projection of the masculine self. Within this construction of masculinity, pain is regarded as non-normative. The boys learn that admitting to pain is associated with a failed masculinity and thus are already inserting within and regulating the boundaries of acceptable masculine practices. Refusing to succumb to pain and domination thus fuels normative constructions of masculinity (Swain 2003).

- Nhloso When they start with me I want to be fit to defend myself. I don't want to hit but boys and girls bully me in the school.
- Boysie When you are at school you can't hit someone at school. Teachers hit you if you hit people at school...
- Khetso When you have muscles you can hit and they help you fight...
- Xolani When someone fights with me...and I can fight back. Some robbers carry guns, they take our money. I'll use my muscles. I'll use my tactics to hit him and get the gun. I'll take the gun put it away and hit him but I won't kill him.

The defending body is further contextualised in relation to school and community violence where relations of domination and subordination play out. Inside schools, the violence takes the form of bullying with both girls and boys bullying younger boys with smaller bodies such as Nhloso. Whilst the practice of masculinity is dependent on what the body can and cannot do (Connell 2002), the boys

carve out a sense of power based on their young bodies but orientate it towards masculine power more broadly. They are learning to accrue benefits by virtue of their gender. Xolani for instance is certainly not able to defend himself realistically against robbers. His testimony however allows for and is orientated towards masculine body, muscles and the tactical fighting which are key to the formation of successful masculinity and which brings agency. For Nhloso relations of domination means the need to create and invest in steeling a defending body. The limits of the body are also clear. Boysie interrupts the conversation suggesting that violence in schools is met with corporal punishment (albeit banned). The capabilities of the young body are restricted in relation to the capabilities of adult bodies and deeply entwined with the social context.

The strong body was also illustrative in relation to an emphasis placed on soccer. As noted, the focus on soccer is not accidental but interacts with the larger context at *KwaDabeka* and the country, where soccer has historically been aligned to African players:

- Spha I'm good in soccer because I learnt to pass, pass the ball and when you pass the ball you get a goal. You need to exercise because you'll be strong.
- Tulani So you won't be weak is someone pushes you... but we can't play with big boys. We don't want to play with them because they hurt us, stamp on us.
- Menzi Soccer I enjoy playing it. When you play soccer you exercise your body and when you score a goal everybody is happy... your bones will be in good shape. I'll get strong. When your bones are not strong enough and when you play soccer and people push you, you get hurt easily. When your bones are strong you don't cry because you don't feel the pain...

Sport is a masculinising institution (Connell 2005). Spha invests in soccer skills, exercise and strength (strong bones) as key markers of success and is central to masculinising processes of the junior body. Tackling involves bodily strength and "bodily strength is an important resource and a prerequisite in physical games that are deliberately designed by the boys to test toughness and stamina" (Swain 2003, p. 304). The process of becoming a body is entwined with being a boy and the construction of masculinity and accrual of power. The weak are marginalised and pain is regulated. At age seven and eight boys mark out soccer as key to their masculine investments but this is not fixed. The body requires work otherwise there is risk of getting pushed, hurt and thus dominated. The body as Swain (2003) notes produces dominant and subordinated forms of masculinity. Bodies thus differentiate and create contradictions within and between masculinities (Hauge and Haavind 2011). Bigger boys are constructed as more powerful who stamp and hurt them. The body can be strong but it can also constrain if it is weak and weaker than others. As Connell (2005, p. 5) argues, "The body is inescapable in the construction of masculinity; but what is inescapable is not fixed".

Fame and Fortune: Sport, Race and Class

The body is produced in the intersection of masculinity and the social context within which it is situated.

In this section, attention is given to the ways in which sport, body and class intersect—as boys connect body, sport, masculinity and economic power. In doing so, they project agency and an escape from the drudgery of everyday poverty at *KwaDabeka*. For many boys, the ideal soccer player is drawn from their experiences of television coverage of professional matches:

- Kheto When you get older then you can teach young to play soccer so that they can learn soccer and play on TV.
- Spha Doctor Khumalo, Brian Baloyi, Jabu Pule, Siyabonga Nomvete, Benny McCarthy. You can get money and win a trophy. I want to be famous. I want to get a car. I want to play for Bafana Bafana, Kaiser Chiefs. I also want to be an overseas player.
- Lindani I like Baloyi, Baloyi, he is good and no goals pass him.

There was ample discussion about South African soccer heroes with overwhelming support for the country's national soccer team Bafana Bafana and successful players. Body, money and masculinity are put together and the materiality of sporty masculinity becomes clear. A fantasy of the ideal soccer hero emerges. Economic success is rooted in the desire to address the poverty in which they are currently embedded:

- Boysie Soccer is nice. It makes you fit and when you play professionally you will get money. You buy things with it. You can buy a house and you get rich. When I play soccer I get fit and you can even do wrestling.
- Nhlanhla I know soccer very well to pass the ball and goal keeping then you will know how to play.
- Spha You get money from soccer and when you win you can go overseas.

Collectively the boys learn to associate sporting success with the transformation of their economic conditions as they associate soccer with fitness, noting the particular techniques that give rise to success. Professional soccer is a means to provide a better life and key instantiation of successful masculinity. Another sport through which fame and fortune are connected to the body and masculinity was wrestling:

- Lindani I want to box. I want to lift weights so that I get muscles. So I'll enter a competition, I want to do wrestling. Wrestling is money especially when you win a belt you get a lot of money, when I get that money I will help my parents. I will buy a new house.

In the social constitution of masculinity, lifting weights, muscle building, wrestling and money are intertwined to produce a better life. Being and becoming a boy arises in the intersection the body and masculinity and boys negotiate how the

body is produced in relation to their social contexts (Bartholomaeus 2012). Under circumstances of continued economic misery and unemployment in *KwaDabeka*, the body is deployed in relation to soccer and wrestling as avenues to open up and facilitate economic success and a successful masculinity. Race, class, gender, masculinity are entwined in the ways in which the body is produced under specific circumstances. The important point is that boys are learning about the power of the body. They may not be able to demonstrate professional status and the muscular body at age seven and eight but, as Bhana (2008) argues their fantasies of success and heroes and future projections are key to the development of their agency.

Bullwood

Steeling the Skilled Body

At Bullwood emphasis was placed on body skills and sport drawing from economic and social capital. Learning sports skills involves both the physical act and mediation by the broader social environment (Connell 2005). Being skilled is cited as significant in the making of successful boys:

- Daniel Muscles don't depend on how strong you are. Say somebody could be stronger than another person but that other person who is weaker than them can have bigger muscles.
- Researcher How come?
- Daniel 'Cos, it's just like that.
- Daniel Like a puny guy against a tall guy and a tall guy's so big and he's a puny guy and the puny guy's muscles are not so big.
- Johan Like on WWE [World Wrestling Entertainment] there's people who are also weak but they've got more skills, like if they fight with a big guy who's very strong you could win 'cos they have more skills.
- Researcher What kind of skill?
- Ricky I know... Like Judo, I've been doing judo for longer than Johan 'cos Johan only started this year and I've started last year and my brother started when he was this age so I've got more skills... 'cos George our coach, he teaches us more throws and then ... Johan wasn't here and I learnt those throws and I know more throws than Johan so that's why I can go for more throws and get him down.

The boys know a great deal about two aspects of power: force and skill (Connell 2002). Force and skill in sport capture the masculine ideal for many boys and men (Drummond 2014). Ricky is able to construct his skill and toughness positively. Being proficient in judo requires skill and force. The crucial point here is that Ricky can operate efficiently in a space and on Johan "I know more throws than Johan so that's why I can go for more throws and get him down." Using his knowledge of skill and force Ricky demonstrates a more powerful masculine identity than Johan.

Aligning to sporty masculinity is not easy. It requires an understanding of body size, physical skills and the way in which it is presented to others (Connell 1987). The young boys demonstrate sophisticated knowledge of force and skill, providing a means through which they can measure and evaluate each other. Force and skill in judo become a means of judging the degree of one's masculinity. Johan's degree of sporty masculinity is thus questioned while Ricky is closely aligned to the ideal and thus establishing a pecking order of masculinities. A fine balance is thus required between force and skill, attack and defence (Skelton 2001). Ricky's ability to demonstrate knowledge of that balance granted him power over Johan and other boys in the interview.

Disciplining the Body

The physical sense of being male is not easy (Connell 1987). It requires the development of discipline:

Ricky I'm a very good swimmer, so's my dad. He won the Midmar in his colour caps. He was a blue cap and he won out of the blues in the Midmar... I swim a lot ... 'cos if... and I go to train with my dad at the Health and Racquet and I do swim about four times a week... *ja*... on Sunday and Saturday. I go to train with my dad... *ja* and then you get good muscles and then you look coooooool... And when you go like this (flexes muscles)... the veins pop.

An effect of Ricky's investment in the body was that training four times a week and on "Sunday and Saturday" became a marker of a desirable masculinity. The father-son relationship (the feeling of male togetherness and identification) was also important in consolidating sporty masculinity in which the ultimate goal is to "pop veins" and "look (heterosexually) cool." Ricky took great pleasure in stating that his father had won in the prestigious Midmar Mile Race. The Midmar Mile Race is a yearly swimming event in the Midmar Dam in KwaZulu-Natal. Whilst efforts have been made to change the racial profile of this event it remains predominantly white. The Midmar Mile reflects the country's racialised sporting histories where Africans (and blacks more broadly) did not have the resources to support swimming. There are clear benefits in the identification, the bonding and construction of his father as a good swimmer and a winner. Ricky cannot yet meet that normative pattern of conduct. He is eight-years old but there are clear benefits yielded by identifying with his father. Success at swimming is a significant factor in determining the hierarchies of power and establishing his position in the jockeying for power. This raises the need for greater discipline, and training in the path to victory and is key in the policing of the body. Excessive training is a standard through which Ricky evaluates himself (and others). He constructs himself as a "very good swimmer". In reality, the excessive training may not have been the case as later in the conversation Ricky states:

Ricky I swim four times a week and I am a good freestyler and freestyle works your arms.

Demonstrating rigour and discipline was significant in the manufacture and positioning of hegemonic masculinity. Daniel points this out:

Daniel I've got weights at my house and every time I do 20. Every night and every morning I do 20. They got like three plates heavy plates on them but not like plates like I lift then up every night and every morning.
 Researcher How much do they weigh?
 Daniel Oh, I don't know.

"Every night and every morning I do 20", shows how knowledge of, and actual training, are important markers of sporting success. The significant point here is that the interview process provides a ripe context through which their masculinity can be measured and evaluated. Both attempt to position themselves (unrealistically) to an idealised training schedule. Policing the body and highlighting a rigorous (though questionable) training schedule is a significant factor in determining the hierarchies of power and success for these boys. To know about sport, training and the rigour involved was just as important in the making of masculinity.

Sexualising the Junior Body

Being competent in sport and having muscles was a key signifier for heterosexual masculinity and heterosexual fantasies.

Johan The girls go for you (giggles and laughs with other boys)
 Researcher How come?
 Johan I don't know. I've got a girlfriend who's ten years old (giggles and laughs)
 Researcher And?
 Johan I don't know. She just likes me
 Researcher Do you have muscles?
 Johan *Ja*
 Researcher Tell me why do girls go for muscles?
 Johan Good looks... look... strong strong
 Daniel Ya, strong. You can push the table up and ahhhh (pushes the table and shows his muscles). If you got like muscles the girls go for you and even like... they like... got their foot stuck under a big table, you just need to go... (pulls the table up). And they "ah thank you" (giggle)...

This extract suggests the ways in which boy's heterosexual talk publicly validates their masculinity to others in the group and went some way in reinforcing dominant heterosexual masculinities while subordinating femininities (Mac an Ghaill 1994;

Renold 2005; Bhana 2013) “Good looks, strong, strong” and the ability to win girls over with the demonstration of physical power affirms sporty heterosexual masculinity. The conversation about girls was a source of humour for the boys. Humour and teasing have been identified as an instance of a stylised form of heterosexual masculinity (Allen 2014). In fact, Nayak and Kehily (2001), claim that sexuality is an uncertain realm which gives rise to joke telling and hyperbolic performance. It is the chief means through which girls are brought into the boys’ worlds.

Researcher Do girls play sport?

Trent *Ja*, girlie cricket (*laughs*) when they use a tennis bat to play cricket... *ja*, that’s girlie cricket when they play tennis they use cricket bats (*laughs*)... Some girls are sexy. They put on their bikinis and look at all the boys and the boys fall in love with them. They get engaged and kiss and smooch all the time (*laughs*)... Girls need to exercise ’cos, they need to get hot and sexy.

Researcher Hot and sexy! For what?

Trent To get a husband. (*laughs*)

Teasing, mocking giggling and laughing about girls is a key to boys’ production of heterosexual masculine identities. Heteronormative desire is thus mimicked through the sexual objectification of girls. The humour surrounding girlie cricket and reference to “hot and sexy girls” reinforced the boy’s heterosexual dominance. At the same time, though, overt heterosexual practices, such as kissing and smooching and getting a husband are not considered normal for young seven- and eight-year old boys. Trent thus positions himself in advance of his age, fantasising about kissing and being engaged. Skelton (2001) finds that interaction in the peer group allows young primary school boys to negotiate their gender identities by playing out the confusions and ambiguities from the adult in ways that make them familiar. Like Skelton’s study, Trent negotiates his masculine identity by including girls through heterosexual desirability and by excluding through misogynistic mockery. It is important to recognize that the focus group conversations were a means through which a collective heterosexual identity was constructed and were thus flexible. Like Frosh et al. (2002, p. 114), the identities that boys were constructing in relation to the ways they were talking about girls were flexible and dependent on the situation they were in.

You Can Do an F5 on Her

There is a close connection between aggressive masculinity, and sport. Sport is a key site for the manifestation of violence. The experiences of violence are celebrated as active agents in the masculinising process. This process is complex:

Researcher And what about muscles?

Johan Like when you’re just standing there it [*muscles*] just pops out, and then you can rip the fence down.

Researcher Why would you rip the fence down?

Johan For fun.

Researcher What else can you do with muscles?

Johan You can rescue people.

Being a boy is confusing. Johan's ambivalence moves from parading a masculine identity based on "fun fight" aggression to a masculinity that "impels men to fight bushfires, search for lost children, join in rescue operations" (Jordan 1995, p. 81). Muscularity, physical courage and strength cannot be written off as only manifesting as violence, but can potentially exist for inhabiting hero masculinity without being violent and involving the denigration of girls. Dominant sporty modes of masculinity are not necessarily aggressive. Johan's ambivalence suggests the fine-grained and complex ways in which masculinity is constructed (Skelton 2001). Alternative forms of masculinity operate around and within dominant masculinity. However, broader options are constantly challenged as Daniel amplifies:

Daniel And when you grow up you can deal with your wife (giggles)

Researcher How?

Daniel Like kick her in the bum (laughing)

Johan Slam the door behind her.

Ricky If you've got big muscles you don't have to shout, look (flexes muscles).

Ricky You can say, "go to the shop and stay there for an hour".

Daniel You can do a F5 on her and throw her in that water with piranhas and you can pick up a tree and chuck it on her head (laughs)

Researcher Would you really?

Daniel If she's been ugly to you... if she's been ... like throw a shoe at you.

Researcher Why?

Johan Because like if she like throws a knife at you and she misses and then you like get mad at her and ... I'll just give her an axe and say (voice changes) "Go chop of a branch of the mulberry tree". (laughs)

Daniel I play golf and I will knock a ball into her eye and then I will knock another one into her eye (laughs).

Aggressive competitive behaviour, a key feature of sporty masculinity, is not considered appropriate behaviour outside of the sporting terrain. It is women and girls who are mainly at the receiving end of aggressive behaviour. Daniel's reference to "F5" is the use of the right arm to lift up a person on the right leg and onto the shoulder. The above conversation took place amidst a great deal of giggling and laughter. There are no guarantees that these young boys will actually enact the exaggerated violent behaviour. Masculinity is fluid and is open to change. However, the significant point here is that young boys have already positioned themselves within a repertoire of conduct which subordinates and mocks femininity and through which they have a laugh together (Skelton 2001).

Conclusion

By drawing on young boys between the ages of seven and eight in two socially different contexts, the chapter has illustrated some of the social processes through which the body intersects with masculinity. In sharpening the focus of the study, the chapter showed how race, class, gender and sexuality are embedded within the social constitution of the junior body. The body is socially constituted and the social location provides the opportunities for the development of particular kinds of bodies and particular kinds of boys. The chapter has shown how boys negotiate the process through which the body is produced whilst attempting to construct a 'real boy'. The junior male body is linked intricately to the acquisition of muscles, skills and training regimes within the local context that make some bodies possible and others not.

At *KwaDabeka*, the body is positioned as defending against the broader backdrop where violence is an everyday routine. The focus on muscles and strength confirms broader masculine positions of power but is also responsive to the social conditions that enable bodies. The idealisation of the fantasies associated with soccer brings body, economics and masculinity together as boys imagine a life away from the grinding poverty at *KwaDabeka*. At Bullwood wealth, masculinity and the body coalesce to produce an emphasis on skills, discipline and rigour, and the sexualisation of the body that also reproduces gender inequalities and aggression. As Hauge and Haavind (2011) note through acquiring some bodies and some skills and capacities certain masculinities are rendered possible.

Boys are bodies and bodies are critical to the making of masculinities that are deeply embedded within relations of power and inequalities. The emphasis placed on sport, skills, muscles and strength which some of the boys emphasised as key to being and becoming a boy in their context and explains why these boys invest heavily in the body. The discipline and rigour for instance in talking about swimming routines at Bullwood is a case in point suggesting why boys invest so much in the sport. But this is deeply located within the social context and the choices and options for the junior body are inextricably caught up in the economic and social conditions that allow and enable a particular kind of body and masculinity. Even at age seven and eight, boys at *KwaDabeka* highlight the need for a defending body- a body that can defend against the scourge of crime and violence in the area. Whilst other research suggests that defending masculinity is related to responsibility and control (Hauge and Haavind 2011), the emerging body at *KwaDabeka* is one that is highly aware of the power of the body to defend in the context of violence and crime.

The chapter has shown the intersection of the body with masculinities and social processes including gender, race, class and sexuality. Boys are active subjects in the process of making bodies. The idealisation of muscles, strength and aggression is based on being and becoming boys. The process of building bodies that intersect with masculinities is premised upon underlying gender inequalities and relations of domination and subordination. This is cause for concern.

The analysis in this chapter suggests important implications for early childhood curriculum. Boys and bodies matter. A focus on how boys give meaning to their bodies and the gendered implications are required. How boys learn to do body and masculinity is embedded within conventional understandings of masculinity that do not serve the interests of gender equality. Teachers need to include boys in their own right, under different school circumstances to understand boys' talk and the implications for the body and relations of domination and subordination. Beginning the work towards addressing gender equality in early childhood curriculum requires a focus on the ways in which bodies matter in the social constitution of masculinity.

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“They’ve Always Got Flat Tummies and It Really Bugs Us”

Sue Jackson

Abstract In a contradictory fashion, media re/produce girls’ bodies as problematic whilst also circulating the representations purported to ‘cause’ girls’ troubled body/self image. In recent years, concerns that media are having damaging effects on girls’ embodied sense of self have intensified within the context of claims that girls are being ‘sexualised’, in part, through their engagement with popular culture’s emphasis on the slim, ‘sexy’, ‘hot’ body. However, the evidence used to support claims of harm to girls has relied on media effects research and psychologising frameworks which obscure the complexity of the relationship between girls’ embodied identities and media images. Strikingly, research with girls themselves to illuminate the ways they make sense of popular culture representations in relation to embodied self is sparse. Drawing on a media video diary study about ‘tween’ popular culture with 71 pre-teen girls, this chapter contributes an understanding of relationships between media images and girls’ embodied identities. In particular, the chapter highlights girls’ affective experiencing of media images as they engage in a complex relationship with the bodies and body practices represented in popular culture. On the one hand, girls voiced desire to conform with beauty practices designed to achieve appearance norms, but on the other they critiqued ‘faked’ perfection and unrealistic body images. Such findings underline girls’ embodied self-understandings in relation to media representations as multi-layered and irreducible to linear ‘media effects’.

Popular culture has long been a source of making meanings about femininity for girls, and much has been written by feminist scholars about the often limiting versions of girlhood they are presented with (Currie 1999; Driscoll 2002). Amongst the limitations discussed in the literature, beauty ideals conveyed by media and consumed by girls have been particularly critiqued (Kilbourne 1999; McRobbie 2000; Pierce 1990; Ussher 1997). Of significance for pre-teen and younger girls ‘growing up’ in the last 12 years, the proliferation of a postfeminist popular culture

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has intensified the focus on the body as central to meanings of self (Gill 2007a, b). The body has moved beyond representing the purely physical in terms of looks and is now expected to convey neoliberal (postfeminist) values of individualism, self-responsibility and agency (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008). As a visual text of meaning, the body reveals these values through evidence of being ‘worked on’ and disciplined in order to construct it within norms of perfectibility (e.g., flawless, slim; Gill 2007a, b; McRobbie 2009). Under the intense body scrutiny that characterises a postfeminist neoliberal culture (McRobbie 2009), failure to comply is read as a failed, irresponsible, poorly managed self. In girls’ postfeminist media culture, the ideal postfeminist subject (i.e. slim, white, middle-class, flawlessly groomed, ‘sexy’) is prolifically (re)produced. Take for example the covers and content of the fashion pages of their magazines, the celebrity culture they engage with and the movies they watch (Jackson and Westrupp 2010). So too is the work required to create this ideal postfeminist body made explicit, nowhere more clearly than in girls’ magazines: diets framed as ‘healthy eating’, articles and advertisements for skin care products, advice on grooming and ‘taking care of yourself’ and quizzes to check heterosexual desirability (Brookes and Kelly 2008; Hopkins 2002; Keller 2011). How do girls make sense of these ideal postfeminist subjects in popular culture, and what do their understandings mean for their sense of self? These are the questions that this chapter explores through pre-teen girls’ talk about their bodies gathered from a project about girls’ understandings of postfeminist ‘tween’ popular culture. Firstly, however, I review important theoretical frameworks through which the relationship between girls’, their bodies and the popular culture they consume has been understood.

Conceptualising the Girls-Bodies-Media Relationship

The complex relationship between femininity, popular culture and the body has underpinned two influential and widely circulated texts of the early 1990s: Susan Bordo’s (1993) *Unbearable Weight* and Naomi Wolf’s (1990) *The Beauty Myth*. These authors wrote of Western culture’s obsession with the female body, the punishing limitations culture imposed on how women were expected to look, and the regimes required to achieve the desired (and desirable) body. Wolf (1990) both argued that the cost of this normalisation of the ‘slender ideal’ could be seen in the staggering rise of eating disorders, anorexia in particular, which Bordo (1993) framed as ‘complex crystallisations of culture’ (p. 35).

Although Bordo (1993) and Wolf’s (1990) interrogations of culture, bodies and femininity focused on women, there has been a parallel, sometimes intense, academic interest in the relationships between girls’ bodies, sense of self and popular culture representations of women and girls. However, in contrast to Bordo’s (1993) articulation of the complexity of the relationship, much of the literature about girls, in particular the psychological literature, has presented a somewhat more simplistic account. Fundamentally, the literature has engaged a media effects model that

assumes a linear relationship between girls' engagement with media bodies and ways they then view themselves and their own bodies (Budgeon 2015; Coleman 2008). Within the media effects model girls are positioned as a susceptible and easily influenced audience who want to look like the slim movie and popstar celebrities in the popular culture they consume. Conversely, media are constructed as an all-powerful 'bad influence' that has pathologising effects for girls. Amongst the most widely reported effects are distorted and poor body-image, low self-esteem, depression and eating disorders (Hamilton 2007). Such claims about the effects of media on girls' body practices and well-being are not new; the psychological literature has been documenting statistical relationships between experimental exposure to slim representations of women and a raft of psychological measures (e.g. self-esteem, eating behaviours) since at least the 1980s (Blood 2005). However, in line with Gill's (2012) work, I would argue that there has been a re-energising of academic interest that has now scooped up girls-body-media concerns as part of a moral panic around claims that girls are being 'sexualised' by the hypersexual representations in the media they engage with in their everyday lives. For example, the American Psychological Association Task Force Report on the Sexualisation of Girls (2007) suggests that girls' sexualisation in and through media leads to body dissatisfaction, body shame, eating disorders, and 'feelings of disgust toward one's physical self'. Commenting on the conflation of 'sexualisation' with beauty and appearance issues, Gill (2012) ventures that concerns about the impact of anorectic models on girls' body image and self-esteem in the 1990s 'would seem to have been displaced onto "sexualisation"' (p. 492) in the 'noughties'. Much of the 'evidence' for the detrimental effects 'sexualisation' has on girls' embodiment has been extrapolated from the psychological media effects literature.

To view girls' bodies as an effect of media representations is, as various feminist theorists point out, to grossly simplify the relationship and to strip girls of critical capacities and agency. Budgeon (2003), for example, argues that constructing self-image as caused by representations (media images in particular) pathologises women as 'cultural dupes' who simply soak up images and seek to replicate them. Recent feminist work using Deleuzian theory challenges conceptualisations of images and bodies in linear cause and effect ways (Bray and Colebrook 1998; Budgeon 2003; Coleman 2008). Rather, images and bodies are seen in relational terms, each being 'aspects of ongoing practices of negotiation, reformation and encounter' (Bray and Colebrook 1998, p. 38), each implicated in the other (Budgeon 2003). Coleman (2008) suggests that girls experience their bodies through and with images in ways that are variously enabling and constraining. She describes the relationship as one of affect, not effect, and one of mutuality in that 'bodies both affect and are affected by other bodies' (p. 174) and within this affective relationship she suggests that bodies 'become', in multiple ways, through images. This relational and affective approach to theorising girls' embodied responses to images is central to this chapter's exploration of girls' talk about their embodied experiences of media bodies. Through breaking down notions of media as straightforwardly producing girls' emotions, and these emotions being 'fixed',

it allows us to understand, for example, possibilities of girls experiencing both desire to be like a media body *and* also feeling ‘disgusted’ or ‘ugly’ or ‘bad’ about themselves. A relational, affective approach also leads us to ask about the possibilities media images may open up for ways of being/becoming girls as well as what they may shut down as ‘impossibilities’. Importantly, we also draw on Wetherell (2014) and Ahmed’s (2004) critical work on affect to contextualise girls’ embodied affective relationships with media within their cultural, social milieu. For example, girls’ experiences of ‘feeling bad’, desiring slimness or wanting to look like a model must be contextualised within the normalising effects of beauty discourses that constitute femininity (Bordo 1993).

Conceptualising girls’ embodied experiences of media representations as an affective relationship that flows through socio-cultural discourses contrasts markedly with the framework that characterises the ‘body image’ literature about girls’ embodiment. Whereas our approach views girls’ bodies and selves as inextricably intertwined in embodied subjectivity, the body image literature extensively centres on the body as ‘object’, somewhat other to the self (e.g., Slater and Tiggeman 2010). Studies are framed in the language of body dissatisfaction, attitudes and psychopathology (Paxton et al. 2011; Shroff and Thompson 2006; Tiggeman and Miller 2010). As mentioned earlier, there is a dominance of a psychological media effects framework in this literature wherein media are constructed as all-powerful, effecting girls’ body dissatisfaction, self-loathing and ‘disordered’ eating practices (e.g., Ashkali et al. (2014); see also Special Issue of Media Psychology on Media and Body Image 2014). Alternatively, this chapter contributes a substantively more complex and contradictory picture of the ways girls’ negotiate embodied subjectivity in relation to media images. It complicates straightforward notions of girls as seeking to emulate the media images they engage with, viewing girls’ bodies and bodies-in-images as inter-related in complex and multiple ways. In so doing, the chapter aims to build on and extend feminist girlhood studies scholarship seeking to illuminate the multiple ways through which girls construct their embodied identities.

Researching Girls, Media, and Embodiment

In our study with pre-teen girls about ways they made sense of popular culture in relation to self and others we found the concept of an affective relationship with media images to be particularly relevant. The following excerpts of girls’ talk in which they discuss their embodied sense of self in relation to media images are from a three year study which involved 71 pre-teen girls (11–13). The project was school-based and girls were recruited from two North Island and three South Island schools in New Zealand. An ethnically diverse group of girls participated in the project but based on demographic and material data (i.e. filming in girls’ homes) most girls could be described as middle class. We reference class as a relevant context in a study where girls’ access to various media technologies (‘new’ and ‘old’) was implicit, which may have deterred some girls from participating.

The research used both focus group discussions, involving six to ten girls in each group, and media video diaries. For the media video diary arm of the project, girls were given Handycam recorders to take home and asked to spend a little time each day showing and/or talking to us about the media they engaged with over a one month period. The study was repeated the following year as a way of exploring shifts in girls’ relationships with media (more details about the study can be found in Vares et al. 2011).

In the excerpts that follow, some have been extracted from focus group discussions and others from media video diaries of girls who were also in those discussion groups. In the thematic analysis of both types of material, the category ‘bodies’ was substantive and overlapped considerably with the ‘celebrity’ and ‘clothing’ categories. For the purposes of this chapter, material in which girls talked about their own bodies in relation to media bodies was specifically selected from the broader ‘bodies’ category. Within this sub-group two broad, intertwining patterns could be identified: one pattern related to girls’ talk about ‘feeling fat’ and the other to ‘feeling bad about yourself’. The analyses of extracts selected from these two themes are grounded in a feminist poststructuralist approach that focuses on (i) how girls experiences of self and bodies in relation to media images are affectively constructed and (ii) how these affects and constructions are informed by socio-cultural discourses.

Feeling Fat

In discussions and media video diaries, a compelling sense of the policed, surveilled female body pervaded girls’ talk about their own and others’ bodies (e.g. celebrities; the ‘universal’ girl). Bodies were ‘too fat’, ‘too skinny’ or had tummies that ‘stick out too much’ signalling transgressions of a cultural norm requiring girls’ and women’s bodies to be a particular size and shape. Girls’ affective experiencing of these non-normative bodies (e.g. anxieties, disgust, discomfort) worked to underline the powerfulness of the slim (or ‘thin’ Malson) ideal to constitute them as abject, outside of desirable embodied femininity (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008). Disgust is a particularly potent marker of the abject (Skeggs 2004) and the manner in which it may fold into a girl’s embodied subjectivity can be seen in the following discussion amongst a group of 11 year old Pakeha (indigenous term for white) girls about wearing a bikini.

- Tiina: I was kind of intrigued about why girls the same age as you don’t want to wear a bikini.
- Roshan: I wouldn’t in front of my parents because it’s weird.
- Unknown: I wouldn’t at school.
- Anita: [A teacher] told me off for wearing a bikini at school.
- Portia: I stopped wearing it because I’m too fat.
- Group: No you’re not!

- Portia: My belly just flops out—it's disgusting.
 Tiina: Poppy you are not fat. Really.
 Portia: OK, but you have to say that.
 Tiina: It's also about how we *think* we look.
 Roshan: When you look at yourself you look so fat.
 Tiina: When you look at yourself do you think you look fat?
 Roshan: Yeah
 [overlapping talk]
 Karissa: I think I'm really skinny, because I am but that's because I'm really small. Everyone makes fun of me because of my chicken legs. It's so annoying.

[11/12 year old girls; Roshan, Maori; Karissa, South African; Portia and Amy NZ Pakeha]

In the girls' talk here, the bikini has important significations for how girls feel about their bodies. As a garment, the bikini not only exposes a great deal of the body but its coverage of only breasts and pubic areas draws emphasis to those parts of the body that bear sexual connotations. Such meanings of the bikini may require careful negotiation by pre-teen girls who are constituted as asexual subjects in discourses of girls' sexualisation that circulate widely in media and public spheres (Egan 2013). In the girls' discussion, the school is a particular site of negotiation around their exposed bodies; one of the girls (unidentified) expresses her discomfort with being seen in a bikini at school whereas in Amy's case the school (via teacher) regulates the appropriateness of wearing a bikini at school. Ropine's comment about feeling 'weird' about wearing a bikini in front of her parents suggests another site of negotiation where perhaps for some pre-teen girls, like Ropine, the bikini's significations of sexuality conflict with the taboos that dominate constructions of girlhood sexuality. For Poppy though, it is not the contexts in which a bikini may be worn that lead her to discount it as a possibility but the way she feels about herself. Poppy's claims of now being 'too fat' to wear a bikini because her 'belly just flops out' orients to meanings of the bikini which are associated with, in Anglo American cultures at least, the slender, toned body. Against what Wolf (1990) once termed the 'tyranny of slenderness', the 'fat' body is constructed as an object of loathing and disgust, feelings that characterise the way Poppy now regards her own body.

As Gill (2007) points out, in recent years there has been an intensified media focus on the female body as central to identity. This focus addresses a very particular body: slim but curvaceous, 'sexy', white, and young, a body that needs to be worked on in striving to achieve its desirable form. Because this desirable body is so elusive for so many, 'feeling fat' acquires a normative status signifying the impossibility of obtaining the perfect technologically enabled (e.g. nutritionists, personal trainers, photo-shopping) bodies that dominate contemporary popular culture. Ropine conveys a sense of this 'feeling fat' norm when she says 'when you look at yourself you feel fat', her 'you' generalising the feeling as a shared one but also subsequently personalised in response to Tina's direct question. Yet the failure

to obtain the perfectly slender body extends beyond feeling 'too fat' as is evident in Kirsten's account of being 'really skinny'; she is subjected to the punishing regulatory surveillance of others who 'make fun' of her for straying 'too far' from a norm of slenderness. Both the 'fat' and the 'skinny' body, then, constitute the abject 'other'. In Ringrose and Walkerdine's (2008) words an 'uninhabitable subject position eliciting shame and disgust' (p. 234).

Girls in the next excerpt explicitly link the feelings of 'being fat' to a popular culture that (re)produces images of body perfection.

- Selena: Like, and like, people like, modelling these days, walking around like, all these billboards of like, chicks in bikinis and stuff [Vanessa: Or like, hard-out anorexic] with the perfect body
- Vanessa: Cos um, cos like big people'll be like, 'Oh my Gosh, they're so skinny, I feel so fat,' and it's, it's really unhealthy cos they're like, you can see their bones and they're vomiting, and
- Selena: That's what I do, like, if I, if I watch a movie about anorexic people I feel fat; if I watch a movie about fat people I feel fatter, so [*General laughter*] you can't win, it's not fair
- Vanessa: So yeah, they shouldn't get like, anorexic, like, get people down to like, real skinny
- Selena: They're trying to make people feel, like, uncomfortable about their bodies so that they buy different products like, The Ab-King Pro or whatever
- Iosefina: Yeah! But it doesn't actually work (*laughs*)
- Vanessa: Yeah! Or that, or that, or they have that underwear that goes all the way up to there and it makes your tummy looks skinnier (*laughs*)
- Selena: Yeah, man
- Erica: Oh yeah, that, that stuff that sucks it in
- Int: Magic knickers?
- [General 'yeah! and laughter]
- [12–13 year old Pakeha (Vanessa) and Pasifika girls]

Unlike the previous extract, girls' talk about bodies is punctuated with laughter as they underline and expose the impossibilities or ridiculousness of trying to emulate the body 'perfect' ideal and the tools designed to accomplish it. The sense of a popular culture saturated with 'perfect bodies' on full display (as in a bikini) is evident in Selena's comment about models and billboards. Vanessa, however, constructs these media bodies not as 'perfect' but pathologised as 'skinny', 'unhealthy' bulimic and 'hard-out anorexic'. Both girls identify the relational interplay between girls' bodies and bodies-in-images. To 'feel fat' or 'feel skinny' is relative to a movie star's body, a bikini-clad body on a billboard or a model's body. Vanessa is critical of these 'skinny', 'anorexic' representations of women and girls and Selena points to the hopelessness of ever being able to feel comfortable or good about herself in her comment that 'it's not fair, I can't win' Later in the group discussion, however, Selena states that she does 'kind of feel okay about myself

now' because if she 'looked any different' her boyfriend 'probably wouldn't like me'. Vanessa then counters Selena's claim, teasing her about being the 'one who's going ...I don't really care about it ... but you're like (in a silly voice) "Oh no, I look fat today"', to which Selena provides the rejoinder 'Shut up, you say that too'. These contradictions importantly underline the shifting relationships the girls have with their bodies, caught between how they *want* to feel about them (and perhaps sometimes do) and how they experience them as a source of inadequacy through not measuring up to how girls and women's bodies are normatively constructed in the media. The discussion moves from embodied feelings to technologies designed to achieve- or move toward achieving- the slender body norm. Both the AbPro machine and the underwear that 'makes your tummy look skinny' and 'sucks it up' are examples of products designed to assist in the body modification process. Selena offers a critique that recognises the marketing ploy of working through the body insecurities of potential consumers, or perhaps more actively producing them, in order to sell a product (an AbPro machine in this instance). Belinda also offers a form of critique through her assertion about the ineffectiveness of the machine, presented as a somewhat amusing piece of factual information. Thus, although Gill suggests a discourse recognising the intense beauty regimes required for beauty has been 'exorcised from most sites' (p. 75, 2007a), it has not escaped the notice of these girls.

Girls' critiques of media images were widespread in the project (Jackson et al. 2013; Jackson and Vares 2015) but the capacity to understand bodies as technologically produced or to recognise marketing ploys does not exempt them from experiencing their own bodies in abject ways (see also Coleman 2008). On the other hand, such recognition could, at least discursively, accomplish shifts in the ways girls managed their experiencing of media bodies. The next extract provides an example of this from a video diary. Although girls' talk about the ways they experienced their bodies did occur in focus groups, as the preceding two extracts show, the video diaries seemed to give girls more scope for personal reflections on their relationship with media representations. This was particularly the case for Lily whose video diary entries were extensive and rich with description, critique and reflection of media.

We had this really, really long talk about how we'd both been worried if we were too fat or too thin or, something, and how- and then we had this really long talk about how - it was because whenever you look in the mirror your tummy sticks out, and it's like, in all the movies and stuff, the movie stars, their tummies, they might have big arms or legs or whatever, but they've always got flat tummies and it really bugs us. And we're like, and so eventually we just got, decided that um, they, they probably fake it, and it's like that, what is, um, forgot the word but it's what they do to films and stuff, and that it's not real and that we shouldn't buy it.

[Lily, Pakeha, age 11]

Lily's (and Sarita's) worry about being 'too fat or too thin' seems typical of a normalised feeling amongst girls and young women that their bodies are 'abnormal' and need to be changed (see Budgeon 2003). In this instance, however, the worry is woven through the girls' relationship with the bodies of movie stars who are seen to

invariably have “flat tummies”. There is a connection here with Poppy’s worries about her “belly” and the specific mention of the ‘magic knickers’ to ‘suck up’ the tummy and make it look ‘skinny’ in Vanessa and Beverley’s comments. For all of these girls, the absence of a tummy appears to be a significant marker of the slender, desirable body ideal. Lily and Sarita, though, are ‘bugged’ by the universally flat tummies of movie stars which do not align with their own lived and real ‘tummies that stick out’. However, Lily’s narrative underlines the shifting qualities of girls’ affective relationships with media bodies. Rather than remaining worried and perhaps ‘feeling bad’ about not measuring up to the movie star ideal, Lily and Sarita are able to dismiss the flat tummy as a myth, a manufactured product of media technology. Doing so enables them to reject such embodiment for themselves. Recognising the production of the flat tummy, and not simply the appearance of one, is reminiscent of Coleman’s (2008) girls who similarly recognised that media images had themselves been through a process of ‘becoming’.

Some girls also recognised how celebrity be-comings were themselves intensely monitored and regulated by the media in relation to the perfect body ideal. Eilis, for example, explained:

You know magazines like *Women’s Weekly* is like the worst, it is always like “oh, she is too skinny, she is too fat”, they kinda don’t let you be who you are. You have to be within the weight range to be cool or popular.

[Pakeha, age 11; video diary entry]

In Eilis’s comment, girls’ bodies and media bodies blur in the pejorative surveillance of bodies that characterises postfeminist culture (McRobbie 2009). The ‘perfect’ body as the passport to popularity and social success (Gill) that she signals might equally apply to celebrity popularity as to a girl’s popularity at school. Like girls, celebrities may easily slip outside the norm, their ‘too thin’ or ‘fat’ bodies captured by paparazzi eager to show they have ‘let themselves go’. Observing such surveillance, Fairclough (2008) describes the intense regulatory function of a ‘gossip bitch culture’ that castigates female celebrities deemed to have mismanaged their bodies (appearance, drugs, sexuality), constituting them as abject subjects. Returning to the extract, Eilis also suggests that magazine culture strips celebrities (and perhaps indirectly girls as well) of authenticity, the possibility to ‘be who you are’. The scrutinizing gaze of celebrity bodies in the media drew considerable empathy from some girls, as is evident in the next extract:

- Nikita: I know, I feel really bad for them because like—they have pictures of Britney Spears in the *Woman’s Weekly* I was looking at in the supermarket, and like, they’ve got her with this big huge fat-as tummy and then now she’s like the skinniest person, and she was at the gym and her children were there and they’ve got pictures of her children, I feel really bad for them
- Barhere: Yeah, and it’s like—cos, first, like, they sort of like, like, they sort of like, talk bad, like, ‘oh, oh, this celebrity’s fat’, and then they, and then they lose some weight and then they go, ‘oh, she’s anorexic’
- Renee: Yeah, ‘she’s too skinny!’

Barhere It's like, make up your mind! Do you want them to be fat or thin? It's just like, yeah, I actually feel really sorry for the families cos like, they also (didn't?) have a private life

[Maori, South African and Indian girls, ages 11/12]

The girls display their knowledge of the media's power to construct the celebrity body as abject, a body that has failed to measure up to postfeminist norms of due care and responsibility. As in the previous group discussion, the girls also show their awareness of the impossibility of 'getting it right'; slimming can be overdone risking a pathologising label of anorexia. In her critique, Barhere further constructs a fickle media that has slippery requirements around body size, again underlining the elusiveness of 'getting it right'. Like Barhere, Nikita has an affective empathy for celebrities for whom it not only their bodies that are subjected to the media's regulatory eye but also, through that body surveillance, their children and families. Whereas Nikita and Barhere feel 'bad' and sorry for the celebrities, in the next section girls focus on the power of media images to make girls feel bad about themselves.

Feeling 'Kinda Bad About Yourself'

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the wealth of psychological literature about girls and body image extensively focuses on the damaging effects of media on girls' self-esteem and well-being. Girls in our study certainly drew on a media effects discourse to talk about the way 'perfect' media bodies made them 'feel bad' but the quality and texture of this affective experiencing of self was markedly different to the pathologising and harmful framework that characterises much of the psychological literature. Rather, feeling bad mingled with scepticism, cynicism and antagonism toward media producers as in the following excerpt:

Renata: In the magazines the models [have stupid standards] are too thin and it kinda makes you feel kinda bad about yourself

Catrin: I reckon they look gross

Rohana: Magazines have two sides. They are saying you should like yourself the way you are and then show diet things with skinny girls. It's like you're forever being criticized.

Nadia: Like *Crème*, which is meant for tweens, they have like, 'if you are not happy with your weight?' Like, 'want to be in a bikini?'

[11/12 year old NZ Pakeha girls]

The girls in the group are highly critical, not only of 'too thin' models' bodies in magazines but also the broader magazine content. Chelsea finds the 'too thin' models 'gross' and Natalie illustrates the emphasis placed on girls' bodies as repositories of affective discontent and desire. Rhiannon, on the other hand, draws attention to the kinds of contradictions that pervade postfeminist media texts

(Gill 2007a, b) through her example of the way in which a love your body discourse ('you should like yourself the way you are') juxtaposes content that constructs an unlovable body that requires alteration (by dieting for example). However, the power of media bodies to affect girls registers clearly in Rebekah's critique—the 'too thin' media bodies have the capacity to 'make you feel kind of bad about yourself'. Lily takes up a similar position to Rebekah in a number of her media video diary entries. A very articulate and multi-talented Pakeha middle-class girl, Lily made a number of video diary entries that centred on experiencing her body as unlovable and undesirable against the 'skinny' norm of the movie and pop industry celebrities she encountered in popular culture. Here, though, Lily offers a broader critique around the function of media in relation to girls' embodied desires.

Especially when you look at good movie stars and they make you feel bad about yourself. I think that's the main problem with, with the media and everything is the way that it makes tweens and teenage girls feel about themselves, that's how most anorexia starts - apart from ballet dancing - but, um, I'm sh, you know, those eating habits, all the make-up, the hair, just makes you feel generally bad about yourself. And y, y know, you look at them and you say, 'Oh, what a great singer! it's a pity I'm not good at singing, I'll have to be good at something else - ooh, I, I can be prettier than that person if I got skinny!' (*Starts to really concentrate on a whisp of hair hanging in her face*) You know? Or, 'Look, I must be so fat compared to that person', and stuff like that. So, yeah. (*Sighs*)

Lily constructs 'feel(ing) generally bad about yourself' as an effect of the images that girls access in media. In the cultural landscape that Lily inhabits, discourse linking girls' depression, low self-esteem and eating disorders, to name but a few of the problems cited, is prolific and widely circulated in the aforementioned media effects psychological literature. That she draws on this effects model to understand a relationship between media and girls' feeling about themselves is not, therefore, surprising. Coleman's (2008) theorisation would alternatively hold that 'feeling bad' is not an effect of media images but an example of the ways bodies and images are in an affective relationship with one another. In other words rather than an effect, girls 'feeling bad' about themselves is a particular kind of 'becoming' through relating to a media image. Lily recognises that the images 'captured' are another form of becoming—hair, make-up and diet processes have produced the image on the page. In Evans et al.'s (2010) study, it was young women's lack of access to technologies that celebrities had available to them to be(come) beautiful that evoked 'a sense of hopelessness' about being able to achieve idealised beauty. Lily's pairing of the production processes with girls 'feeling bad' suggests the possibility of a similar kind of sense-making. Alongside the idea that made-up, coiffed, dieted images make girls feel bad about themselves, Lily also constructs them as a potential 'becoming'. To 'get' 'skinny', and therefore pretty, can be a marker of being 'good at something', an accomplishment that can trump talent. The slender body as a marker of success threads a post-feminist discourse (Gill 2009; McRobbie 2009), as well as girls' own accounts about attractiveness (Renold and Allen 2006; Carey et al. 2010).

But the matter of being 'skinny' in order to be 'pretty' is not straightforward—how skinny does a girl need to be? This is a question that Vanessa worked through

in her narrative about wanting to become a model. Vanessa was a talented member of a girl-band. In the earlier extract featuring discussion with girls in her group, she positioned herself as not caring about how she looked, resistant to the 'feeling fat' norm amongst girls her age, and highly critical of the anorexic thin-ness of girls'/women's bodies in the media. Yet in the private space of her room and talking to the researchers through the camera lens we glimpsed a somewhat more vulnerable Vanessa for whom 'real skinny' evokes a fusion of frustration and sadness.

It's hard growing up in, uh, a community like mine, cos you've got all the pressure to be pretty, you know, like, you see these models and they're like, that thin, (thumb and forefinger pinched together) I swear, and everyone's like, 'Oh my God, they're just so hot!' It's like 'yeah... I'm fat!' Like, there's so much pressure to be like, real skinny and anorexic and then you get bulimic and sick like that, it's just like, what the fuck. Yeah, it's kind of sad. And, like, mm, you know, everyone's getting real skinny, especially my friends, and it's like, 'ummm -yeah, I'm skinny, sorta, little - and, and, but then you see like, someone like Beyonce, who's gorgeous, drop-dead gorgeous and she's not that thin - (pinches finger and thumb together again) she's skinny, but she's a healthy skinny, cos, in, in like, in the community, it's like, you, its like in the world today it's all about real skinny and real pretty and stuff, like, 'if you're not skinny, you can't be a model' - it's like, I, (shrugs) cos I've always wanted to be a model, you know, I'm not, I probably won't be that great at it, but I've always wanted to be a model, and stuff - yeah, it's kind of sad that I can't, cos you know, I'm not skinny, not like a twig or something

Vanessa identifies the intense normative pressure to construct a 'pretty' self within a pervasive, inescapable and powerful 'skinny' norm—models—Beyonce', 'everyone', her friends 'especially'. That these pressures may find release in individualised pathology ('bulimic', 'sick') has resonance with some aspects of McRobbie's (2009) account of illegible rage, wherein young women are gender aware and 'know what's going on' but without recourse to political rage their anger turns in on themselves. Vanessa, for example, knows that there is 'so much pressure' on girls and her 'what the fuck' and 'kind of sad' convey a sense of exasperation and perhaps disappointment with contemporary conditions of femininity. Yet, there is also a normalising note in the trajectory she outlines—first there is the pressure to be 'real skinny, then you get bulimic and sick'. McRobbie (2007) also argues that there has been a normalisation of 'body image' problems such that young women have 'no alternative but to recognise themselves within normative pathologies which the state and popular culture cultivate' (p. 7). Vanessa, however, finds space outside of pathology in the 'healthy skinny' of the 'drop dead gorgeous Beyonce', constructed against a 'twig' which, demonstrated by her thumb and forefinger pressed together, is skeletal. These variances of skinny allow Vanessa an embodied identity as 'skinny sorta little' (and so possibly 'healthy skinny') but not 'skinny' enough to be a model since that would require her to be 'twig' skinny. Through the elision of 'real skinny and real pretty' Vanessa's access to attractiveness also seems to be limited. On the other hand, if Beyonce' can be both 'drop dead gorgeous' and 'healthy skinny', then a possibility of becoming 'gorgeous' may also be available to Vanessa. Despite her critical awareness of a powerful 'skinny' norm and its associated normative pathology, Vanessa claims and re-claims her long-standing desire to be a model. Perhaps the desire to become a

model alights upon aspects that have less to do with the way model bodies look and more about what model bodies can potentially do in opening up possibilities of success, wealth, glamour and celebrity status. Desire and critique present a complex coupling in which the latter does not 'undo' the former.

Concluding Comments

A primary goal of this chapter has been to extend knowledge about the ways that girls are experiencing and relating to the embodied femininities within the post-feminist popular culture that they engage with in their everyday lives. In particular, the chapter has sought to explore whether and how girls' sense-making of media bodies connects with their sense of possibilities for self. Reflecting on the girls' talk in their friendship discussion groups and media video diaries, it is very clear that girls' relationship with bodies in media images is both affective and complex and woven into the backcloth of discourses that construct contemporary meanings of femininity. One expression of such complexity is the shifting and transformative quality of bodies across time, context and space. So, for example, Vanessa dismissively critiques the skinny models in discussion of media bodies with friends but in the space of her bedroom manages a more negotiated path where 'skinny' can be healthy and not pathological and where desire intermingles with repudiation. Shifting embodiments across space were also highlighted within groups as when Selena and Vanessa distanced themselves from concerns about 'looking fat' only to later be exposed by one another as saying it in other contexts. School and family contexts worked not only to regulate (directly or indirectly) the display of bikini bodies but also affectively in terms of how girls felt about showing their bodies. These patterns of shifting embodied subjectivities resonate with a theorisation of bodies as always in process, open to change and negotiated across multiple sites (Budgeon 2003).

Although the girls tended to use a media effects discourse to frame the relationship between girls' embodied selves and media bodies, their accounts suggested a considerably more complex process. Counter to the media effects notion that girls desire to be just like the 'skinny' models and celebrities they see in the media, the girls here rejected and critiqued such bodies although this was largely accomplished through a pathologising discourse of the unhealthy or anorexic body. On the one hand, their rejections signified that the "skinny" body did not present a possibility of becoming for self but on the other the powerfulness of what it could make possible drew recognition and, sometimes, desire (e.g. becoming a successful, glamorous model, becoming 'pretty', becoming 'popular'). But it was the impossibility of becoming the ubiquitous slim subject of postfeminist media culture that most inflected girls' affective experiencing of images and their own bodies. In contrast to the technology-enabled 'perfect bodies' in media, girls had 'bellies' or 'tummies' that made them 'feel fat', 'bad', 'worried' and 'disgusted'. The girls' affective experiencing of themselves in these ways can be understood as flowing through the

pervasive ‘norms of perfectibility’ (McRobbie 2000) and slenderness that structure the postfeminist cultural landscape they inhabit. Whereas girls’ critiques troubled these norms, their feelings underline the powerfulness of the idealised media body to construct, in some moments, their self-experience. This complex relationship is not unique to the girls in the study but rather, as Gill (2007) highlights, a reflection that our critical awareness and knowledge does not exempt us from being influenced by the cultural landscape we inhabit.

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“Fuck Your Body Image”: Teen Girls’ Twitter and Instagram Feminism in and Around School

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Abstract In this chapter we interrogate some of the core ideas of postfeminism as theorized by feminist media scholars (see McRobbie, *All about the girl*. Routledge, London, 2004a; McRobbie, *Fem Med Stud* 4:255–264, 2004b and Gill, *Gender and the media*. Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006) that feminism is in its ‘aftermath’, and largely refuted and disidentified with by girls and young women (Scharff, *Repudiating feminism: young women in a neoliberal world*. Ashgate, Farnham, 2012). Considering the current rise of fourth wave social media feminisms as pedagogical platforms for challenging everyday sexism, we explore the complex dynamics through which girls are taking up, negotiating and performing on and offline feminism in and around school. We focus on a teen feminist group in a London ‘theatre’ school, exploring how social media feminisms presented a platform for challenging what Angela McRobbie identifies as dominant trends of postfeminist pathologies of femininity including psychological disaffection and bodily malaise. Drawing on theories of networked affect, we document how this feminist group used social media to oppose their distinctly neo-liberalized and marketized school environment where bodily regulation, perfection and self-ability reign supreme.

Introduction: Postfeminist Feminine Psychical and Bodily Pathologies

In contemporary media culture women and girls are repeatedly told that they are free to make choices that were fought for and won by feminism. Angela McRobbie’s influential argument, in *The Aftermath of feminism* (2009b), however, is that in lifestyle consumer based culture, choice actually becomes a key modality of constraint for

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women and girls. In what Gill (2007) has called a dominant ‘postfeminist sensibility’ the feminine individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who makes the ‘right’ choices within market forces. By these means, new lines and demarcations are drawn between those subjects who are judged responsive to the regime of personal responsibility to choose to ‘look good’, for instance, and those who fail miserably. Indeed, McRobbie and Rosalind Gill see post-feminism as introducing a new form of self-policing and sexism to women’s lives; one that becomes hard to critique and dismantle as sexual self objectification is continually presented as a matter of individual choice and desire. Postfeminism works hand in hand with neo-liberalism, as self perfection and success around appearance and desirability to men continues to represent one of the most important aspects of femininity in contemporary popular make-over culture (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008).

In relation to these new spaces of regulation, McRobbie notes that women and girls are increasingly afflicted with postfeminist pathologies in relation to this culture of ‘looking’ (see Coleman 2009a, b). Girls’ high levels of internalised rage resulting in self-destructing ailments such as anorexia, bulimia, self-harm and general malaise and body-hatred are consequences of this constant critique of the self and comparison to idealised bodies privileged by media. Critical to McRobbie’s arguments, is the simultaneous lack of a popular public feminist discourse, language or movement available for girls and women to challenge and disrupt their postfeminist pathologies. McRobbie argues that the social, economic, and cultural gains of a century of feminist activism and theory have been significantly eroded in favour of framing the movement as disruptive and disjointed, suggesting that in light of post-feminist notions of freedom and choice, feminism is decisively aged and made to seem redundant; an unpalatable option for the young women of today (McRobbie 2009).

Having worked extensively with the notions of postfeminism, the contemporary moment causes us to pause and ask: Are we still living in a postfeminist age? (see also Keller 2015). Are we still living in a moment dominated by dis-identification with feminism on the part of teen girls and young women? Throughout this chapter we will explore girls’ complex negotiations with ‘feminine disaffection’ questioning which forms of feminism these teens are claiming as part of their lives and how they make use of them.

Fourth Wave or Social Media Feminism?

We seem to be witnessing seismic shifts around the uptake of feminism with both popular media and academic research suggesting that we have now entered a fourth wave of feminism, characterised by a sharing of voices, engagement with global politics and a focus on intersectionality. Popular feminist writers such as Baumgardner (2011), Cochrane (2013) and Penny (2014) have identified the internet as a key characteristic of the fourth wave and are encouraging women to ‘shout back’ or ‘call out’ (Munro 2013) misogyny and injustice, utilising social

media sites as a platform for discourse. Information technology now dominates our media landscape, and women are the primary users of most social media sites (Hargittai 2007) therefore the internet provides an unprecedented platform for participatory engagement with feminism in its offering of unique pedagogical platforms and spaces. Indeed, social media sites are so integral to the emergence of fourth wave feminism that research has positioned them as the birthplace of the fourth wave (Leupold 2010; Solomon 2009), and teenagers are navigating this terrain in significant ways.

This fourth wave is characterised by its emergence in online dialogue and connection as information technologies are used for organising networks that bring feminism to prominence (Munro 2013). Feminists are increasingly turning to social media sites to make visible marginalised voices and bodies, and the vast expanse of the internet has opened up significant spaces for discourse and resistance of hegemonic notions of femininity (Eisenhauer 2004; Jowett 2004). According to #FemFuture: Online Feminism, a report recently published by Columbia University’s Barnard Center for Research on Women, the number of women using digital spaces is dramatically increasing, and females aged between 18 and 29 are ‘power’ users of social networks. Content created online, via new media technologies, is increasingly being recognised as an integral part of the communication of social movements and societal politics (Dahlgren 2009; Papacharissi 2014). For feminism, these media frames are fundamental in shaping public opinion of the movement and its ability to maintain some degree of control over its representation.

In 2013, Teen Vogue argued that ‘from taking a stand against slut-shaming to starting their own feminist clubs, high school and college students are at the forefront of the still-evolving (and still important) movement.’ This inclusion of student led feminism demonstrates the reach of the fourth-wave feminist movement and its re-emergence as a concern for young women and girls. For example, in 2014, over 100 students in a US school in Florida staged a mass walkout over what they argued to be the slut shaming discourse surrounding the implementation of a new uniform code. Students and parents were angered at the insistence that violators of the code wear a ‘suit of shame’ and that additional clothing was brought into ensure girls were ‘fully covered’—notably, these violators were almost entirely girls. Drawing on the immediacy and coverage that social media affords, the students created a hashtag, #iammorethanadistracted that trended and garnered global attention (<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/sep/24/us-high-schools-dress-codes-protest-sexism-hemline>).

However, despite much (sometimes sensationalized) media coverage, we note that much of existing academic research into constructing femininities (Gill and Scharff 2011) and different forms of feminism (Budgeon 2011) has not explored adolescent girls and their relationalities with the feminist movement online or off (Ringrose and Renold, forthcoming). For instance, Harris (2008) and Taft (2011) argue that adult centric notions of what feminist activism should be and how it

should ‘look’, often reject girls’ activism as merely ‘generational rebellion’ rather than serious political engagement. Whilst there has been considerable research into the use of online space to construct and perform young feminist identities, especially in regards to blogging (Keller 2015) with Takayoshi early on describing the internet as a ‘clubhouse for girls’ (1999), we still, however, know very little about how teen girls intra-act with feminism through their online engagements with social media platforms like Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram and Facebook. There are debates that position social media activism as ‘slactivism’ thereby locating it as only online and not impacting on ‘real world’ politics (Christensen 2011), but we do not yet know much about how teen activism may transcend the online-offline boundary. There is also very little research into how networked teenage feminism works in the context of *schools*, where bullying and e-safety policies tend to position social media as risky and problematic, rather than a source of activist intelligence and pedagogical potential for young people (Ahn et al. 2012). Overall there seem to be a lack of work exploring teen feminist activism particularly in relation to their use of social media to engage with feminism as part of their learning in and around their experiences of school.

Addressing the Gaps: Teen Feminist Activism and Networked Affect

Using the data introduced below, we will consider the entanglements between a potentially redundant ‘postfeminism’ in the light of this fourth wave, a wave characterized by the surge of feminist engagement rooted in the use of media technologies that allow for the dissemination and sharing of information and lived experience. On the one hand, our research data with teen girls demonstrates that the postfeminist pathologies of body hatred discussed at length by McRobbie are certainly not obsolete with girls facing ongoing daily distress at being subject to the neoliberal, marketization of their ‘learning bodies’. Yet on the other hand, girls are negotiating these issues in complex ways that need to be demonstrated through empirical research. We draw on theories of affectivity, referencing Deleuzo-Guattarian notions of capacities of bodies to affect and be affected—impact upon one another (Coffey 2012), noting that these capacities are refigured in context of social media connectivities dominated by postfeminist visual cultures of ‘looking’ (see Ringrose and Coleman 2013). Social media research on ‘networked affect’ (Hill et al. 2015) is useful for thinking about the complexity of digitally networked peer relations and networked feminism, and how social media connections enabled a group of teen girls to start re-shaping the relationships with their own bodies and with each other. We also draw upon theories of new materiality to understand the intra-actions between digital posts and material gendered relations in offline spaces (see Barad in Van Doorn 2011) and in Ringrose and Renold (forthcoming). We highlight the important pedagogical dynamic of feminist

activism and fourth wave social media posts in how they are intra-acted with by the school-girls in our research. As the chapter will go on to demonstrate, we show the potential for new bodily capacities and affectivities through the girls’ social media engagements with each other, documenting when and how these enable girls’ to disrupt bodily regulations online, in public and at school.

The Research Context: West End High

West End High (a pseudonym) is a fee-paying, co-educational performing arts school in London for students aged 10–16 where three days of the week are based around their academic education and two days are focused on training in drama, dance and singing. There are approximately a third more girls than boys in the school. Despite the school’s admission policy stating that it makes decisions free of any discrimination, the children appear to be given a place on the basis of their marketability for professional work (a striking number of students are slim, able-bodied and white). If, after a formal audition, a child is offered a place at the school, they are automatically signed up to the school’s professional agency meaning that they are available for paid work, of which the agency takes a cut. This is a neoliberal model in which heightened competition is brought within the school walls as students train harder to ‘transform, adapt, reinvent and self perfect’ (Ball 2008 in Ringrose 2013, p. 3) in the hope of beating their peers and ‘getting the part’. Market values and commodification are central to the students as they become constituted in economic terms (Davies and Bansel 2007) for casting directors to either choose or reject. The impact of this school on students’ sense of embodiment is significant; these are bodies to be marketed for consumption in entertainment industries; their changing bodies becoming the very stuff of their subjectivity (Grosz 1994) as they either punished or rewarded for their dimensions. This attention economy (Ringrose 2013, p. 157) is in line with a neoliberal ethos of entrepreneurialism in which the focus is continually on the individual’s self-perfection of the body, however this is a body that cannot be entirely controlled as these teenagers change from pre-pubescence to mature adolescence during their time at the school, an adjustment that comes with considerable loss or gain in ‘professional’ terms. As McRobbie notes in *Aftermath* (2009) there is a double entanglement regarding the problematic co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life (seen here with regards to the ways in which student bodies are measured against specific desirable standards), and we are interested in how girls negotiate these neo-liberal bodily controls under the guise of ‘choice’.

As a part-time teacher of English at the school, Hanna worked alongside a team of five academics to set up a Feminist Group there as part of a larger action research project that worked with academics and teachers across the UK.¹ The data that this chapter will focus on was collected during a session a year into the project. At this point the group had changed significantly from its initial make up of students; when the group was established in 2014 it was made up of eight girls in Years 9 and 10, from which only the Year 9 girls remained due to ridicule in the Year 10 year group for being ‘killjoys’ (Ahmed 2010), feminism constituted as obsolete in the post-feminist context recalling again McRobbie’s thesis (McRobbie 2008). The feminist group received frequent comments from other students about the group such as ‘what about men’s rights?’, ‘we’re going to make a misogyny club’ which signalled it as outmoded, un-needed, unfair, useless; most importantly feminism was designated as *uncool*! Despite this discomfort confronting the views of the other students, many of the Year 9 girls remained and, since becoming Year 10, have been joined by a group of Year 9 students and one Year 8 girl.

As the group gained popularity, the students made posters about their feminism in the hope of putting these up around the school to inform and educate other students. Senior management leaders at the school informed the students that the term ‘feminist’ was ‘not what the school is about’ and that the posters would not be permitted. The girls were also told by senior staff that, in spite of the group already being open to all genders and ages, the name must be changed to something that encompassed ‘everybody’. ‘Equality Club’ is now the group’s official name (although all of the students still term it Feminist Club) and it has taken on an underground status within the school in which it is understood that as long as the group remains quiet, it will be tolerated. Note again this is a quintessential dynamic of postfeminism, where feminism and gender equality has to be blended into a generalised equality remit deemed to be more equal (David 2014). The group is

¹This data is part of a larger project, “Feminism in Schools: Mapping impact in practice”, funded by Cardiff University in 2013. Feminist clubs were set up or researched in seven highly diverse secondary schools across England and Wales, including mixed, single sex and fee paying institutions and from a range of religious, ethnic and socio economic backgrounds. Schools participated for at least 6 weeks, with some still going on at present. To date the project has generated qualitative data with approximately 85 young people (girls and boys), as well as the teachers and academics involved in each of the feminist groups. Students participated in a range of semi-structured group and individual interviews and creative arts based methodologies including documentation of a range of material ‘intra-activisms’ and artefacts from the groups (e.g. poems, writings, blogs, sculptures, and online posts from sites like Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter). The ethics (approved through university ethics board) of the project involved getting informed consent from parents and students to participate in interviews and to document and share some of the group productions, including social media posts and messages through screen shots. All data including social media posts and screen captures were passed through the teacher or lead of the feminist group who then sent the materials to the academic researchers (please see Ringrose 2015 and Ringrose and Renold, forthcoming for further methodological and ethical details about the process of working in this way with schools—what we call working amongst an intra-active feminist research assemblage).

currently made of twelve members, one in Year 8 (white, female), six in Year 9 (5 white females and one Asian female) and five in Year 10 (four white females and one mixed race boy), however, other students also come and go each week depending on their other commitments.

Many of the feminist club sessions have comprised of ‘just talk’; an hour of discussion after school about a key theme introduced by a student; a place where they can discuss prejudice they have experienced in relation to gender or sexuality as well as ways that these problems can be tackled. Talking within a safe space has been termed a key tool for addressing the personal, enabling teenagers to assess their experiences of sexism and find a commonality through their feminism (Ringrose and Renold 2015). As the data (collected through transcribed audio-recordings, research notes and screen shots) will make clear, it is this talking method that has seen the aims of the group change. Their shared feminist identity was carved out most acutely by a talking session that focused on their experience of their bodies. In this session, in which the boy member was not present, the girl’s previous sense of discomfort with the problematic position of occupying the position of young feminist, with all of its undesirable connotations, appeared to be forcibly crushed with the realisation that they *all* felt badly about their body and that to continue to try to be ‘sexy’ under the current terms was useless. The session appeared to have helped their bodies to move in space and place; a more active approach was almost immediately evident as the girls began to connect their feminism to a wider network. It was after this session that the feminist group members set up an Instagram and Twitter account, began to attend protests and started to meet in coffee shops out of school hours.

Using transcripts of the girls talking as well as artefacts such as media coverage of their activism and screenshots of their social media correspondence, the data below is a way to think through what communicating through social media and public activism has done (and is doing) for the girls as schooled-bodies within a networked assemblage that navigates various affective forces.

‘There’s a Flaw in the System’: Uniforming Dangerous Bodies

The data that this section will focus on was collected during a ‘just talk’ feminist group meeting during which five girls discussed their feelings about the school uniform. Bodies are regulated at the school through clothing (Raby 2013) according to the part of the week they are in; academic days require a traditional school uniform with a tie and a compulsory skirt for the girls whilst vocational days demand complex combinations of leotards, tights and tracksuit bottoms. At the beginning of the session the students were asked about what they wear during the week and their feelings about the uniform.

- Taylor At the beginning we were told we have to wear the leotard and the tights that don't show off your things, then it was like 'no', you have to go to this shop and get these tights that don't show off your things so now we have to wear certain things that don't show off certain parts of our legs which stick to you and you sweat so crazily...
- Catherine The girls can't walk around with just tights on around school—they have to wear tracksuit bottoms as well. The girls can't wear tracksuit bottoms all the time because they want you to look all girly during dance but then god-forbid a girl walks around school with tights on.
- Lacey No, they've changed the rule now—you're allowed to walk around in tights.
- Catherine From class to class—not allowed in the cafeteria. I've got a detention for that.
- Taylor There's a flaw in the system—on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we'll have to get on our knees to prove our skirts are long enough but then on Thursday and Fridays it's like show it off.
- Cathy On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday we can't show our thighs but then on Thursdays we have to show our thighs.
- Katie And you have to be skinny and short otherwise then you're showing too much thigh. And I'm always having to buy special dance shoes 'cos my feet are too big and then I get told off 'cos they aren't the right ones!
- Ruby There's this big thing about girls getting changed in the studios—if you do it then it's a massive deal but there's shirtless boys everywhere. We can't even show our bra straps.
- Catherine It's a double message—you have to be a schoolgirl and not show anything but then you also have to be able to really see it on vocational days but without you being slutty—you can't win. There's no point where you can be wearing the uniform and getting it right.
- Taylor You have to be skinny but not too skinny—you have to be fit but not too curvy and you have to be good looking but you can't be a slut and you have to be like 'don't touch me I'm 15' and you can't be a prude because that's weird. There's no way to be one thing because one thing links to another thing and then you're in this whole mess of craziness.

What we are interested in drawing attention to in this section is how quickly (and without prompting) the discussion of their uniform becomes one of their heightened sexualisation through the eyes of the school. Moral panic over the sexualisation of girls is widespread in the UK (Ringrose 2013, p. 47) and this clearly feeds into the school's discourses around 'covering up' on academic days, however what is most noticeable here is the students' frustration with the conflicting discourses of protection and exposure of their bodies. The girls' describe an acute awareness of the sexual reading of their bodies (Ringrose and Renold 2014) in the contradictory message between ensuring the body is kept outside of the learning environment yet exposing it within the dance class but making sure it is not outside of the

performing arts class unless in certain areas. It is also clear that the girls sense the confusion of the adults making these rules and what it is they want to do with these teenage bodies. The adults’ fascination with the possibility of sexuality and their frenzied attempts to regulate which parts of the body are displayed appears to have a paradoxical effect by drawing the students’ attention towards the innocent/corrupted binary. The anxiety that teenage bodies create in adults as they cross the boundary between child and adult has created what Egan terms an ‘obsessive focus on protection’ (Egan 2013, p. 114) used as a defensive posture against a frightening ambivalence. The cultural construction of children’s bodies as asexual but always ‘on the verge of sexual corruption from something or someone suspect’ (Egan 2013, p. 114) is evident in the academic day ‘don’t show your thighs’ rule and then complicated by the ‘show it off’ but ‘not in the cafeteria’ rule on vocational days. The message of ‘show it’, ‘don’t show it’ tells the students that their female bodies must be monitored, regulated and controlled, an idea that draws on an evolutionary fantasy about hard-wired aggressive male sexuality (Gavey 2005)—the idea that a ‘biological (or affective) force will stir up crazed, uncontrollable hormonal sexual desire when in the company of women (Renold and Ringrose 2012, p. 334). The school’s attempts to regulate where and when the body is shown (and thus where and when it qualifies as dangerous) draws on essentialised understandings of the female body as provocative no matter whether it is in on display in a thong or veiled in a burqa (Duits and Van Zoonen 2006). For the girls there is ‘no point where [they] can get it right’ since their bodies are regarded as precarious at every turn. These discourses around femininity are ‘schizoid’ placing the girls ‘both as ambassadors of a pedagogy around female oppression, yet simultaneously held hostage to a discourse of sexual risk and protection (of themselves and others)’ (Ringrose and Renold 2012, p. 338). The school determines parameters within which the body can be sexualised—the tights where everything is on show versus the dress code where hemlines must be a certain length. The anxiety-inducing ambivalence as felt by the adults is transferred to the students causing ‘great pain [...] for the subject because it is lived as a failure to become the desired singular subjectivity’ (Walkerdine 2003, p. 247) as, in their attempt to become ‘rational, unitary and autonomous subjects’ (the ‘I am this’) they are confronted with a ‘failure to classify themselves as they feel they are too ‘sluttish’ or too ‘prudish’. The next section will focus on the ways the girls negotiate the schizoid pulls to be sexy and innocent.

‘Fuck Your Body Image!’ from Feminist Defeat to Intra-Acting Inspo-Paras

The following data focuses on a particular feminist group session that highlights the girls’ bodies as unstable economy (Ringrose 2013); an uncontrollable moving force that can increase or diminish the chance of a successful career and future

‘happiness’. During many of the feminist group meetings the topic of the body and its link to success was raised. According to the girls, if you don’t look like a child (young and sexually undeveloped) then it is unlikely you’ll be employed in the sought after theatre productions celebrated by the school; therefore many students whose bodies have shot upwards or outwards during their years at the school have been unable to secure any professional work. During this feminist group session the Year 8 and 9 girls specifically asked for a discussion of body image, a topic we had covered before, however in this instance the focus centred on their bodies in relation to employment and representations of body in the media; a topic of particular relevance to these girls whose bodies could eventually come to form these representations.

- Lacey I watched a Fosters advert the day yesterday where men were funny and normal looking and all the women were very skinny. Why are men’s personalities valued over their bodies when it is only women’s bodies that matter?
- Katie Men can be whatever they want no matter how they look.
- Ruby Magazines like Closer and Now make me feel terrible about my body not being right. Also if a woman is not typically attractive and is in the media then she has to make that the point like Miranda with her branding as clumsy and not able to get a man.
- Katie You have to look young here so that you get professional work—since starting I haven’t had any work.
- Catrin Me too.
- Ruby Because it’s a ‘children’s’ theatre school you have to look so young.
- Tori It helps if you are under 5 ft and skinny.

The duty of neo-liberalism, the mission to ‘become somebody’ reveals what has been termed ‘the delusionary character of self-determining, individualistic and autonomous ideas of subjectivity’ (Gonick 2001 in Walkerdine 2003, p. 247). Here placed within the context of the theatre school—the marketization aspect of neo-liberalism is heightened, and the sell-a-bility of the body direct. We see a desired ‘I will become this person and then I will be happy ever after’ (Walkerdine 2003, p. 247) discourse that the neo-liberal subject invests so deeply in is affirmed by this extract as the girls discuss the ideal marketable ‘success-story’ body type, however, what is also recognized is that this is an ideal they can never reach. Corporeality’s clear attachment to phallogcentric norms of women as closer to nature and animals (Braidotti 2013) is referenced in Lacey’s point about ‘men’s personalities being valued over their bodies’. Grosz writes likewise that whilst women ‘take on the function of being *the* body [...] men are left free to soar to the heights of theoretical reflection’ (Grosz 1994, p. 22), a statement that links directly to Lacey’s frustration at men’s freedom to be funny and ‘normal’. The girls feel pressure to be younger, smaller and skinnier than they are; to shrink themselves. The small and innocent ideals of girlhood discussed at length by Walkerdine (1997a, b) manifest here in relation to the market demands of the theatre industry.

In response to the girl's comments, Hanna ran an exercise in which they spent five minutes writing down anything that they could think of that they liked about their bodies. The response to this was one that signalled pain; the girls squirmed and grimaced and repeated that there was 'nothing'. To transform their bodies into one *as* young, *as* skinny and *as* short as the ideal are unreachable goals and it appeared that to write anything 'positive' down would only compound their sense of failure. A communal sense of depression set into the group meeting; the discussion and exercise set about the feeling that they could not 'become a consuming subject, the subject for which happiness is apparently possible' (Walkerline 2003, p. 247). Affect theory is needed as a way to think through this experience and the way it formed psychical, felt, experiential effects inside the human but it is also more than human with spatial, atmospheric and other effects. An affective 'trapping' (Ringrose and Renold 2012, p. 338) took place in this session as melancholic doom mounted and some of the girls looked on the verge of tears; the 'collective experience providing' the potential to sink into melancholic states about the feminist complaint or wound (Berlant 2005, 2008). What was surprising, however, was the next morning Lacey, Katie, Catrin, Tori and Ruby came to class in a collectively excited state to say that they had spent the evening sending each other 'inspirational paragraphs', or 'inspo paras' as they termed them, in order to encourage each other into feeling better about their bodies. The use of iMessage, Instagram and What's App, rather than simply saying the words to each other, created a digitised element that fostered both confidence (giving and receiving compliments being easier from behind a screen) and security (through the message's permanence) (see Figs. 1 and 2).

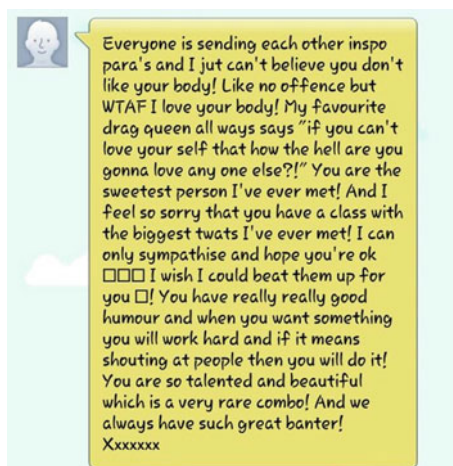
These messages carry the networked affects of the emojis; the hearts and cats to conjure cuteness and love; the poo and crying face to communicate the difficult states that their friendships help them overcome. Emojis, like emoticons, are a "means of textually mediating affect that would otherwise be conveyed through facial expressions or tone of voice" (Paasonen 2015, p. 30). These messages created a networked affective force or 'jolt' (ibid) amongst the girls in which their compliments worked as gifts that moved back and forth and across in a 'circulation of affective solidarities' (Ringrose and Renold 2015, p. 11).

More than a simple affective intensity, however, these messages hold politicized meanings (Ringrose 2008). We theorize that they show us a 'feminist line of flight

Fig. 1 Inspo para 1

Babe, you are the kindest, most loving, intelligente, sweet, big boobied girl I know💖 you are so stunning especially when you don't wear makeup🙄 you are Always the first person I turn to when I'm upset because I know you'll always listen and help me even if I'm being a massive poo💩 your curves make me want to cry🥹🥹 and your just AMAZING💖

Fig. 2 Inspo para 2



—a freeing and lifting away from the heavy regulatory gaze’ (Renold and Ringrose, 2014, p. 2) felt around their feminine embodiment. This was evident when Ruby said that she would now write down what she liked about herself ‘everyday’. Moreover it is not simply *online* heated flames (as discussed by Passonen 2015), rather *what heats up online travels offline* as the girls positively grinned with pleasure at the idea that affirmation had been possible *from each other* rather than having to come from elsewhere; they sensed a power in this and a new appreciation for one another was evident in their manner. So rather than sinking into melancholy, the alchemy of the distress with their feminism seemed to spark potential—enab (ling) feminist becomings of affirmative thinking and/or acting differently or positive energy (potential) as described by Braidotti (2013).

Attention to this shift in energy requires theoretical focus on how affect flows through research assemblages and when and where it intensifies. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical notion of affect, the energy amongst the girls had ‘heat[ed] up’ and broken off into a ‘line of flight’ (Ringrose and Renold 2014: 338) in which energy can be mapped as having been depressed during the feminist talk session to such a degree that it then sprung its way back into the formation of a digital assemblage in which the girls elevated each other’s energies through the use of the inspo-paras or social media gifts to each other.

It is also important to question, however, the extent to which the regulative ‘gaze had shifted’; the messages clearly affirm a continual return to the same reference point; concern over ‘whether or not they were accepted in relation to the heterosexual, a masculine gaze of approval’ (Ringrose and Renold 2014, p. 20) is still evident as the girls complement each other within a frame of reference that holds tightly to a fantasy of girlhood. The girls are raising each other up through celebrating ways in which their bodies conform to hegemonic norms. So even when they are resisting pressures, their compliments still rely on notion that worth lies in body appeal/attractiveness. In this sense their sense of agency within their messages

to one another is confounded by the frame of discursive reference they are working within. Bakhtin writes of words coming not from a dictionary but from ‘other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions’ (Bakhtin 1981, p. 342 in Davies 1990, p. 343), a point clearly evident here as the girls complement each other on ways their appearance and personality traits live up to a particular (classed and raced) standard that can never be fully met. Particular femininities are given value here and the ‘critical role’ that men play ‘in establishing this rank by rewarding particular femininities’ (Armstrong et al. 2014, p. 103) is evident in the compliments given. But these are more than discursive—they are material-discursive (Barad 2007). The aesthetic performances of femininity up for reward here including ‘big boobied, stunning, soft hair, amazing lips and eyes’ whilst the character traits include ‘kind, loving, listener, sweet’ (with the notable exception of ‘strong’, however, within this particular context ‘strong’ referred to an incident in which the girl hadn’t talked back to her dad when he told her to lose weight). These appear to be all in line with the ‘respectable femininity’ that is ‘synonymous with the polite, accommodating, demure style often performed by the white middle class’ (Armstrong et al. 2014, p. 103) and rewarded by the girls in their networked force of acceptance and encouragement of the femininities on offer. The ways then that the spoken and written word trapped the girls within sets of competing discourses is apparent, although they had broken out of the femininity ideal to not ‘big oneself up’ at the expense of one another and to offer praise to each other rather than direct hetero-sexualised aggression.

Further catalytic impact was made clear, however, when during the same week through the Twitter account Lacey had set up for the group, the girls heard about a protest taking place in Hyde Park against the ‘Are you Beach Body Ready?’ advertising campaign. This campaign for weight-loss products caused much social media controversy amongst feminists who reacted against its implication that only the idealised photo-shopped image of the female body was ‘ready’ for the beach. This new ‘intra-action’ with a larger community of feminists connected the girls beyond the confines of a school that did not support their ideas and into an alternative space in which their ‘digital feminist selves’ could engage with other feminists.

Networked Affect Intra-Acting with Feminist Activism in Public Space

Paasonen et al. (2015: p.3) suggest that theories of networked affect can help us to see “how individual, collective, discursive and networked bodies both human and machine... are modified by one another. Similarly, Renold et al. (2015, p. 15) describe this as a ‘digital-material-sensory-affective-spatial assemblage’ in which experiences of sexism and activist events become ‘part of the whole affective sensorium’ that connects those dealing with sexism. Using their Twitter handle the

girls tweeted photos in reaction to the Beach Body campaign and through following hashtags found out about the protest.

Whilst research has suggested that much of girls' activism is hidden from view (Taft 2011), in this instance this led to greater visibility of their feminism. The girls found themselves to be the only teenagers at the protest thus their presence *as teenagers* meant they stood out from the adults. A high profile political magazine interviewed the girls and a popular online magazine (that they all happened to be fans of) created a cartoon of them all standing with their banner saying 'Fuck your Body Image' (see Fig. 3) and shows parts of their bodies written on with the words 'I am Beautiful'. The New Statesman article concluded by stating that if these girls were the 'next generation of feminists' the interviewer would give 'this sort of advertising ten years-tops' (Boland, New Statesman, <http://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2015/05/inspiring-young-feminists-who-took-back-beach-protein-world>).

When the girls returned to school on Monday they were ecstatic about the media attention their activism had received; the positive recognition from exterior and well-renowned sources appearing to stimulate further their freeing and lifting from the sexual regulation of their bodies (Ringrose and Renold 2014: 5). Their attendance at the protest had temporarily ruptured the defeatist sense of impossibility of 'being' what they could not be, and allowed them to be recognised as 'teenage feminists'. To have gone to their first protest, made a reactionary poster, written on their bodies in pen and to then be rewarded for it through media coverage confounded the reward/punish discourse of West End High dramatically. The

Fig. 3 Reproduced with the permission of Becky Barnicoat (artist) and BuzzFeed



recognition was *for* a display of confidence (writing self-loving comments onto their bodies), reacting angrily against a populist slogan (creating the ‘Fuck your Body Image’ poster) and publicly identifying as feminists (agreeing for their full names to be printed), and this rupture of the ‘small and skinny’ narrative of West End High was highly significant.

Their affect was networked (Paasonen 2015)—it was made possible through new media platforms, but significantly these intra-act’ with the real life spaces of school and street. This ‘intra-activity’ ‘between objects, bodies, discourses and non-human things’ made the girls feel ‘confident and inspired’; a force that networked around the group, into external spaces and then back to the girls in an ‘spatial-temporal— affective sensation’ (Ringrose and Renold 2015, p. 3).

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate how a group of girls utilised social media to connect, share, challenge, disrupt and refigure the very meanings of their ‘learning bodies’ in online and offline spaces. These findings contribute to a new set of research literature on fourth wave feminism that indicates ways that girls and women are troubling ‘postfeminist’ dominant forms of beauty and embodiment (Gill 2008) through their uses of social media (Lawrence 2015). We have sought to contribute to the documentation of these processes by exploring how online connectivity enables girls to confront postfeminist pathologies of body hatred (McRobbie 2009) by forging new relationships with each other and their own bodies. We have documented the complexities of the girls’ online intra-actions, noting changes between the girls through their uses of social media. We showed how Instagram and iPhone inspo-paras, for instance, were part of an emergence of new networked affectivities, replete with emojis that communicated support and caring digitally. We saw the use of Twitter feminism to connect with a wider audience and the movement of their feminism out into public spaces. They also gained public visibility via an online news story, and the excitement and challenge of this being brought back into their school.

Documenting all these processes demonstrate that girls are dismantling misogyny across conventional space-time-body parameters. This evidence shores up the ‘prosthetic potential’ (Wajcman 2004) offered by social media, network technologies, in ways that show how bodily integrity and affectivity can be reworked (Hillis et al. 2015). These relationships need continued exploration; particularly into the ways that cyber-subjectivities re-draw the matterings of gendered embodiment. Indeed, the internet is in providing a platform for feminist engagements in ways that disrupt an online/offline binary; ‘virtual life’ on the internet being neither disembodied nor decontextualized but materialised in everyday life (Munster 2006). The transcending of their online activism to offline action is critical to note within

debates about online ‘slactivism’, given the girls’ feminist engagements, heated affects and activism travelled through and beyond social media. Girls and self-identified women are engaging with internet technologies in ways that enable them to transform their embodied selves, not to escape embodiment, but to re-shape embodiment; these social media platforms becoming important spaces of feminist intra-action, experimentation and learning.

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Internet Sex Chatting and “Vernacular Masculinity” Among Hong Kong Youth

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Abstract Through examining the highly popular practice of internet-based “sex chatting,” this work attempts to theorize the rapidly changing forms, norms, and values of sex as an important facet of internet chatting culture. Internet-based “sex chat” refers to the casual exchange of vernacular views about sexual beliefs, rumors, and behavior. Sociological, popular culture, and gender studies have suggested that internet-based social chatting about sex is an informal social practice pursued mainly by men, and as such, the chat room or forum is considered a space for the ongoing construction of particular modes of masculinity. This study is grounded in a detailed empirical netnographic study of the *Hong Kong Golden Forum* (GF), a highly popular internet chat site in a city known to have a vibrant culture of internet forum chatting. After investigating the main recurring themes in sex chatting conducted in GF, and the specificities of the language used by the chatters (including written and visual slangs, metaphors, tones, and registers), I ask how the themes and language of “sex chat” contribute to the construction of a “vernacular masculine culture” specific to youth culture in Hong Kong. Like a colloquial language, the notion of “vernacular masculinity” speaks the idiom of the curious, the obscene, and even the vulgar. It is hoped that this ethnographic study helps to reframe our theoretical and political understanding of sexual values shaped by a profoundly quotidian source of meaning-making.

Introduction

The overall aim of this work is to theorize the conception of contemporary sexual values through an empirical ethnographic analysis of internet social chatting made by social actors who engage in “sex chat.” Internet-based “sex chat” refers to the

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casual exchange of vernacular views about sexual beliefs, rumours and behavior, conducted either synchronously or asynchronously within a monitored or unmonitored environment. The chatting can arise from any initiation made by the chatters themselves, or it can be driven by social controversies and moral panics about sex. The chatting often involves written text and visual icons that are generated by the users, often forming its own universe of linguistic and visual slangs, metaphors, tones and registers.

Research in Sociology and Social Psychology tells us that social chatting about sex is an informal social practice—on the internet or not—pursued mainly by men (the gender of the chatter is at least self-identified as such) (e.g. Adamse and Motta 1996; Bowring 2005; Gill 2012; Greenfield and Subrahmanyam 2003; Wolak et al. 2008). Critical popular culture studies regards this lack of formality as socially significant, because it affords the particular practice of “sex chat” in the first place, while actually constituting the very cultural character of the content of the chatting (e.g. Kammeyer 2008; Ray 2007; Waskul 2003, 2004). Meanwhile, gender studies regards the “maleness” of sex chatting as something originating from a general cultural permissiveness that often positions men to be more outspoken than women in the public pursuit of explicit sexual conversation (e.g. Del-Teso-Craviotto 2008; O’Riordan and Phillips 2007; Ringrose et al. 2013; Soukup 1999). At any rate, the chat room or forum where sex chatting takes place is a predominantly male space. To be more precise, it is a space for the ongoing construction of particular modes of masculinity.

Little is known about the sexual values that mediate “sex chat,” nor the particularities of the chat space, the nature of the modes of masculinity constructed through the chatting practice, and the broader social milieu out of which the sex chat discourse emerges. A theorization of the conception of sexual values through investigating internet sex chatting is necessary as a response to rapidly changing forms, norms, and values of sex as a result of the digitalisation of everyday life. Yet this digitalisation of virtually all walks of life, especially in human communication, is itself a result of the changing contour of the consumer society that emphasizes creative interaction, social efficiency, instant gratification, and so on. At the same time, this digital life, as well as the consumerist ideology that underlines it, have not gone unnoticed by the regulators of culture. The intense social and legal scrutiny of the dynamic space where sex and the internet mix, is by now commonplace.

This project grounds the theoretical examination of contemporary sexual values in the electronic age in a detailed empirical study of a highly popular internet chat site in Hong Kong known as the *Hong Kong Golden Forum* (hereafter “GF”) (香港高登討論區). Ranked as a top site in Hong Kong by Alexa (2009), GF is a chat site well-known to be visited mainly by youth (and older adults). To date, there has been no ethnographic research of cyber-masculinity in Hong Kong. The handful of existing work that looks at the construction of Chinese masculinity appears in cinema studies (e.g. Enns 2000; Lo 1996; Shu 2003) and media consumption studies (e.g. Lin and Tong 2007; Young and Chan 2005). This study is first of its kind to take an in-depth look at the specific forms of local masculinity articulated through a popular and seemingly enduring pastime. What I am interested in finding

out include the main recurring themes in the sex chatting, and the specificities of the language used by the chatters, including written and visual slangs, metaphors, tones, and registers, that seek to reconstitute the meaning of sex (e.g. terminologies, behavior, relations of sex) *as* a function of the chatting (as opposed to the normative conceptions of sex in society). Through looking at the themes and language of sex chat, I examine how they may be contributing to the emergence of a “vernacular masculine culture” specific to Hong Kong and unique to its internet chatting culture. I define vernacular masculinity as a casual “lad culture” characterised by a continuing curiosity toward all things bodily and sexual, a non-contemplative, even unrefined sensibility, and a “social cool” built not on class distinctions or educational attainment, but on street knowledge and popular taste. Like a colloquial language, this masculinity speaks the idiom of the curious, the obscene, and even the vulgar.

In this study, six university male research helpers were employed and trained to perform participant observation in the GF site. The period of observation and participating in the chatting lasted for six months in 2013. The average amount of time for engaging with the chat sites was about ten hours per week.

Netnography: A Methodological Note

This study adopts netnographic methods for a critical qualitative study of sex chatting. While there exists a huge body of research on the internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC), only some of this work is qualitative research, and of this, an even smaller portion is ethnographic research (Garcia et al. 2009). Traditional ethnographic studies are firmly situated in the offline social world. Yet drawing on the tools adopted by cultural studies in conducting ethnography, with a commitment to what Paula Saukko calls a practice and a mode of cultural analysis “to be truer to lived realities of people” (Saukko 2003, 56; see also Gray 2003), netnography has become an increasing influential qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that emerge through CMC (Kozinets 2002; Langer and Beckman 2005).¹

It is important to note the specific considerations necessary in adjusting traditional ethnography to netnography. They include:

1. *Researcher’s access to and co-presence with the research subjects*: Since online ethnographers are not physically co-present with the targeted subjects, they must develop a strategy for accessing the online community with minimal disturbance

¹In this project, I forgo the idea of recruiting the chatters for face-to-face interview, because that would have significantly lengthened the project. Besides, this project’s precepts rest in examining sexual speech and a masculine culture that *arise* from the modalities of chatting, and not from offline follow-up reflections.

made to their discourse, and for managing their identity and presentation of self in the textual and visual media. Much of this has to do with the researcher's ability to display cultural competence of the norms of the group they are studying. This requires an appropriate shift from an initial period of conventional participant observation to a more formal period of what Walstrom (2004) usefully suggests as "participant experiencing." According to Walstrom, the participant experienter "entails the role of active contributor to the group being studied. This role specifically refers to a researcher who has personal experience with the central problem being discussed by group participants" (175). This means an active and ongoing reading and posting of messages to the group, after making an initial effort (known as "lurking"), so as to discern the online chatting environment, including a patient observation of the kind of conversation that is happening, the clues to pick up on, and the extent to which participants may become reluctant to speak about a certain subject.²

2. *Management of textual and visual data:* The more popular the targeting chat site is, the more active and spirited discussion is assumed to be present. In this way, conversational threads would generate a huge data pool. This must be carefully sorted, formatted, and categorised. In this study, I developed an initial set of thematic categories as a rough guide with which to sort and categorise thematic clusters (see Table 1).
3. *Confidentiality of chatters:* The same protection given to research subjects in a conventional ethnography should be extended to the online chatters. The advantage of working with the internet chatrooms is that most participants are known to use pseudonyms. But some researchers have warned that there is still the possibility that some participants may be using their real names, or if they use the same identification across different chat sites, they may be identifiable after all. Therefore, an added layer of protection will be crucial. To protect the anonymity of the chatters, in this study, we assigned them new codes to distinguish from the onscreen names they use. Although many of the onscreen names the chatters use may already have been pseudonyms, we offer an additional layer of protection by assigning them only the codes used in this particular study.

From this brief discussion about the methodological and ethical concerns for research in the internet environment, it can be said that although there are many problems and dilemmas that researchers face in this fast changing virtual space, we are far from reaching consent on a universal set of guidelines, precautions, and remedies. With the internet occupying so many aspects of our daily lives, the online community has advanced into a terrain where researchers cannot afford to overlook.

²The practice of silent observation, or "lurking," complies with the existing practices endorsed by other netnographers. For instance, that have advocated beginning a participation observation study of online phenomena by "lurking" first. These two researchers used lurking to gain information about consumer's boycotting behavior. The initial period of observation, in fact, gave them information that they then used to create interview questions. In the same vein, in Shoham's (2004) ethnographic study of Israeli chat rooms, he first lurked then gain the chatters' trust, then introduced himself as a newcomer to the community engaged in netnographic research.

Table 1 Initial themes for investigation

1. General
1.1 Sexual values and motivations
1.2 Sexual behaviour and relationships
1.3 Sexual preference and concepts
2. Sex and Health
2.1 Pregnancy
2.2 Body zones and Genital-related queries
2.3 Sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS
3. Sexual Practices
3.1 Intercourse
3.2 Masturbation
3.3 Touching, caressing, kissing
3.4 Oral sex
3.5 Virginity
3.6 Pornography
3.7 Other sexual habits and preferences

This is why, with the fluidity of the internet, it remains difficult for researchers to uphold and follow fixed guidelines. For instance, how can a researcher obtain consent from an online discussion forum where the participants appear and vanish in an unforeseeable pattern? How could researcher confidently identify individuals who change their pseudonym frequently? There are many similar challenges, it would therefore be up to the researchers to chart a creative and ethical balance between their research interests and the protection of their research subjects in a dynamic and changing environment.

The Culture of Internet Chatting in Hong Kong: Popular Problematisations

It is perhaps useful here to present a brief view of the local discussion of youth internet chatting as part and parcel of the broader emergence of internet “idling culture” in Hong Kong. Surprisingly, there has been little news reports and columns that focus on the discussion of internet chatting in Hong Kong. When it does appear, most of them focus on internet crime, slander and sexual harassment; in other words, local news rarely provide any in-depth insights into the activities conducted in chat culture.

Most netizens in Hong Kong claim that people should be responsible for their comments and statements. News of police report on the rise of sexual harassment and even rape cases connected to internet “friends making,” continues to fascinate the public (see “Problematising,” 2010c; “30 % of secondary schools,” 2010b). Many related reporting condemns irresponsible behavior on the internet. In 2010, a story of a teenager claiming that he will set a bomb in the Liaison Office of the

Central People's Government, and one in which a netizen claimed that he wanted to rape a females Legislative Council member ("Threat of rape," 2010a), prompted some chat forums to employ social workers and counsellors to help promote responsible chatting. It was also suggested that the government should implement new laws to regulate the discussion and chatting on the Internet (Lui 2010).

With respect to cyber language use by local youth, the media generally claim that cyber language is negatively affecting the proper language skills of teenagers. But some journalists regard the development of cyber language as an inevitable social process of language evolution. Many teachers complain that their students use "the language from Mars" in their written work ("Strange homonyms," 2009c). Examples of "the language from Mars" include using numbers to represent the words of similar sound (e.g. using "5" to represent "not" in Cantonese), and English spelling in place of Cantonese writing (e.g. using "ng" to refer to the word "唔" meaning "don't know" in Cantonese). Also, since most teenagers use Chinese input methods, such as Cangjie and Pinyin, while chatting on the internet, they develop the habit of inputting by the keys and the pronunciation of words instead of the actual writing of the characters. Further, reliance on the provision of related characters by the input software encourage the users to forget how to write those characters in the absence of the computer. Local media call this a phenomenon of "neo-illiteracy" (Lau 2010). The *Hong Kong Daily News* regarded the creation of "non-mainstream" language as irreverent to the Chinese language ("Popular slangs," 2009d). Increasingly, the education and media sectors encourage parents to learn their children's cyber language in order to combat linguistic generation gap (Leung 2010; Ha et al. 2009; "Using internet slangs," 2009a).

Meanwhile, other columnists and journalist have defended the development of cyber language as a process of local language evolution. They argue that clearly, informal "bad language" has been an effective communication tool on the internet among teenagers; it would be replaced once it loses its utility (Ling 2009). Besides, creativity abounds, such as the combination of both English and Chinese in an expression. For example, the phrase "升呢" combines the Chinese character of "升" to signify "raise" and "呢", which is a Cantonese phonetic adaptation from the English word "level." Together, the phrase signifies "raising of levels" commonly used in video game playing, as well as signifying "let's improve ourselves" more generally. As such, cyber language adequately represents the local Hong Kong culture, by showing that Cantonese is a living language ("Chinese territories," 2009e).

With respect to gender and sex, internet chatting in Hong Kong helps proliferate a number of popular expressions. Some of them are misogynistic and homophobic, while others carry meanings of gender and sexuality that are deliberately vague. In the last few years, internet criticisms of "Kong girls" (港女) flourished, a phrase used to complain about materialistic and self-centered women and girlfriends. Netizens have also used "Gongju Byeong," which is a Korean term to describe women who want to be treated like a princess. A demanding and overbearing

person, the “princess” is said to suffer from a disease (公主病) of fantasising their lovers to be like the prince in the story books, satisfying their every demand of expensive goods and devoted attention (Tung 2010).

As a reaction to the criticism, young women joined the retort on the attack of the “geeky” men. Using the term “duk lam” (毒男), which originates from the Japanese language, the counter-attack aims to criticise men and boys who lack basic social skills and who typically hide in their own apartment indulged in lonely activities of video game playing and porn consumption. The character “毒” (meaning “toxic”) is a homonym to the character “獨” (meaning alone or lonely). It is in this terrain where internet sex chatting flourishes, for it is said that the geeky “toxic males” form their own cyber community to chat about sexual fantasies (“Hong Kong poisonous males,” 2009b).

In sum, like in many other contexts, Hong Kong local culture expresses its concern about the proliferation of negative trends arising from the indulgence of internet chatting. Yet many of the criticisms lack a clear empirical grounding that goes deep into the cyberworld. Chat forums, such as GF, offer a particularly rich ground for the investigation of how the learning bodies of “sex” are negotiated and reconfigured, from within the general atmosphere imbued with continuous doses of social apprehensions, if not mild moral panic.

Discussion: Sexed Linguistic Innovations

Like other kinds of CMC such as emails and instant messaging, chatting on discussion forums is often mediated by the input of texts, images, web links, and attachments of various kinds of digital files. One of the features of language use in these discussion forums is the extensive use of icons, short phrases, and idioms that form the web culture of a particular discussion forum. The usage of visual icons in the *Hong Kong Golden Forum* (GF) shows the most originality and creativity. Conversations in GF epitomize the distinctive language usage in all local online forums.

Visual Icons: Sex and Mockery

Many of the visual icons seen in the chat threads are a direct substitution for a certain commonly used expression, such as the inputting of [👉👉👉] to mean “fuck you” and of this bouncing icon [🍑] to mean a big bouncy female breast. Not all icons are crudely referential, though. Some of them express hidden meanings and

are distinctive to the culture of GF. One of the core icons of the forum is the icon of the “Clown God” [🤡].³ Its Chinese expression “膠神” (pronounced as “gao sun” in Cantonese) is comprised of the Chinese characters 膠 gao and 神 Sun. Gao is a phonetic approximation to the word “鳩” (pronounced as “gao”) in Cantonese, which refers to the male genital (and more broadly anything stupid), while “神” (pronounced as “sun”) means god. “Gao Sun/Gao Sun” is therefore a playful linguistic construct to mean the god of the penis or the god of stupidity. And as the icon looks like the face of a clown it is also called the 小丑神 or the “Clown God.” This icon is used very frequently in GF as a shorthand to respond to something stupid or lame in chatting. The icon has been so much embraced by the chatters of GF that they will venerate it as god and recreate it on t-shirts, mugs, and other objects to be adorned among chatters for easy recognition in offline contexts.

Another visual icon that is unique to GF is the hand-waving icon [👋]. This icon has multiple meanings beyond a simple hello. It can signify agreement to or acknowledgement of a certain viewpoint in the conversation. It is also frequently used in the so-called “留明” (leaving name) culture on GF. When someone replies to a particular discussion thread in GF, this thread will be saved automatically by the forum operational program into the personal archive of the respondent. Therefore if someone is interested in a particular post but do not have time to engage at a particular moment, or if they would like to archive a particular post for later reference, they can simply respond to a conversation by inputting an icon, a word, or any way that is the fastest and most convenient so it can be archived into their personal account. This procedure is called “leaving name.” In this case the icons are always used to archive a particular conversation and the hand-waving icon is one of the most frequently used icons for this purpose. However, the hand-waving icon also carries another specific usage distinctive to the sexual contents among chatters in GF. As it is a criminal offence in Hong Kong to directly post nude pictures on discussion forums revealing private body parts (such as the nipples or genitals of a female), chatters who would like to share such materials would only post a web link that leads to the actual sources with explicit sexual contents. But when some chatters who are unaware or ignorant of this offense post a violating material directly on the forums, or accidentally post a nude photo instead of the web link, other chatters would mock him by threatening to hand him into the police through the forum administration. At that time, posting the hand-waving icon issues a mocking expression of saying “bye bye.” Yet, since this gesture is a sheer sardonic expression, those who post it do not really intend to report such violation to the authorities. It is not even a good-willed reminder of the law-breaking nature

³This icon is originally used in the Snitz Forum 2000 developed by an American company Snitz Communications. The Golden Forum at that period used the same forum operational program so the icon could also be used by Golden users. Those who did not know about this history would think that this icon was created by the Golden Forum. Nevertheless the icon has since been widely used by Golden users and it is now recognized as the representing icon of the forum (<http://evchk.wikia.com/wiki/%E5%B0%8F%E4%B8%91icon>).

of the action. All of this conforms to the bragging, teasing, and bullying culture of GF, even as they faithfully practice the use and re-use of those icons (see Table 2 for more discussion of the icons used in GF).

Table 2 Frequently used visual icons in the *Hong Kong Golden Forum*

	Icon	General meaning	Meaning associated with the sex posts
1		The establishing icon of the forum. It is called the 膠神 or 小丑神 “The Clown God.” It is also used to mock people who is doing something stupid (reflecting the Cantonese phrase “on 鳩”—a stupid act or personhood)	
2		An expression of fondness	Fondness of the sexual materials seen in the post by others
3		Another expression of fondness	Fondness of the posted female sexual materials
4		A bomb which is about to go off	To express the difficulty to endure much longer, implying that a certain post is highly sexually arousing
5		An icon of anger	Another expression of high sexual arousal by associating the shooting gun and male ejection
6		“Well done!”	Expressing brotherly appreciation for the posting of good sexual materials
7		A moving icon with a bouncing motion	A shorthand for “big breast”
8		A dislike of a particular post	To express disgust of what the chatters may deem grotesque sexual materials
9		“Fuck you!”	“Fuck you!”
10		A kneeling icon	To ask for more of the posted sexual materials; or to ask for the source from which to download the posted sexual materials
11		An angry face	To express anger toward someone who refuses to post the source of the sexual materials
12		Hand-waving	Used as a “waving goodbye” to a particular chatter who posted prohibited materials, mockingly suggesting that he will face prosecution

Language Play

Alongside the inventive use of visual icons, GF chatters also adopt their own set of idioms that are distinctive to the chatting of sex. Generally, these idioms can be distinguished into two groups: one group draws from original Cantonese phrases with innovative changes with changes (phonetically or semantically), while the other are phrases that are crystallised from layers of transformation and sequences of development within the GF chatting culture. A popular set of terms, for instance, is “filial son” (孝子) and “un-filial son” (不孝子). There are a lot of posts in GF that are commentaries on different sexual materials, including sexual experiences and pornography. Chatters would expect the postmaster—the person who started the post—to paste the link to the source from which to retrieve the sexual materials under discussion, or else they would curse him for not doing so. The curse most often used in Cantonese is “fuck your mother” (屌你老母). So a chatter who starts a sex related post along with a link for easy downloading would be hailed a “filial son”; he is “filial” because he avoids his mother from “being fucked.” As such, the “un-filial son” is a curse hurled at those who forget to or fail to provide the convenience to fellow chatters. From this practice springs a whole range of related idioms in GF, such as the phrases “There are three un-filial acts and the most un-filial act of all is to not provide a seed [for downloading]” (不考有三, 無 seed 爲大) and “Please lend your mother to us for a while” (借你老母一用).⁴ All are crude and misogynistic idioms that extend from a community of chatters tied together by a sense of brotherhood built upon a shared interest in sex.

A conversation in the discussion forum is typically structured by the combination of all the different creative elements illustrated above. The meaning of the idioms used within the conversations take so many turns that it is difficult for outsiders to follow or comprehend. Take, for instance, this sentence from a conversation under the topic of “sex with under-aged girls” in GF:

“報警向左走向右走召喚   

Direct translation: “call the police to the left to the right summoning

⁴The phrase “不考有三, 無 seed 爲大” is a modification from the old saying of Mencius: “不孝有三, 無後爲大” (“There are three infilial acts and the most infilial act is not to have an offspring.”), a creative connection of the act of sharing sexual materials with traditional Chinese ethics of filial piety. The phrase “借你老母一用” (“Please let me borrow your mother for a while.”) is another way of saying “fuck you,” since in Cantonese the expression “fuck you” is the same as saying “fuck your mother.” In this way, to say “let me borrow your mother for a while [so I can fuck her]” is just a playful way of saying “fuck your mother”.

For readers who are not familiar with the culture of GF, this sentence would be incomprehensible. The components include:

- (a) 報警 (“call the police”): arises from the bragging culture in GF in which whenever somebody brags about something against the law, such as having sexual intercourse with under-aged girls, other chatters would mock and frighten the (fake) offender by referring him to the police.
- (b) 向左走向右走 (“to the left to the right”): recognised by the community of chatters as a linguistic equivalent to the “dick” or “fuck” (encapsulated in the common Cantonese slang of “燃”). More generally, the phrase is used to call someone a “dickhead.” The meaning behind this term comes from a time around 2003–2005, when the site administration of GF filtered to block the showing of “dirty language” on its forum site. Thus, whenever someone input dirty words, the filter would cognize in accordance with the repertoire of dirty words pre-set into it. Upon detection, the filter would automatically change the offensive words/phases into another text shown on the webpage. This automatic change on GF—from the inputting of “dick” in a conversation into “to the left to the right”—occurred so frequently that chatters who came later simply input “to the left to the right” and proceeded on the shared understanding of its intended meaning among their fellow chatters.
- (c) 召喚 (“summoning”): refers to the association with a large population of male-nerd netizens who are fond of computer games and Japanese animation, in which the “summoning” of magic powers and sexy goddesses are common.
- (d) The sentence is accompanied by an icon  which is an expression similar to “Yeah!” or “High-five!”.

All taken together, the sentence reads: “Let’s find those police-calling dickheads [to report this to the authority], YEAH!” As mentioned, the chatters do not really call the police; after the mockery fades, nothing would follow. This constitutes a practice of hollowed bravado typical of the GF chatting culture. What remains remarkable, however, is the continuous sense of linguistic creativity and communal bonding, eventually allowing for a different, problematic, if not subterranean, sense of masculinity to emerge.

Vernacular Masculinity

In GF chatting culture, an unrefined but realistic sense of male bravado persists. We need to develop a critical understanding of the emergence (or reformulation) of chatroom-specific masculine culture framing and framed by sexual discourse. This perhaps requires a temporary suspension of value-judgment to either become indifferent to the taken-for-grantedness of male “sexual nature” (the “boys-will-be-boys” thesis), or to condemn this whole segment of popular masculine culture as none other than a hotbed for sexual objectification and misogyny. I suspect that in the end, this kind

of vernacular masculinity—unrefined, cavalier, hollow, informal—exhibits both tendencies. The question remains though: how is this masculine sensibility, crude as it may be, distributed and operationalized across the vast sexual terrain opened up by the chatroom culture, and what does it tell us about the nature of meaning of “sex” as something being constantly reformulated in virtual space?

Indeed, it is the case that most of the active participants (either the initiators of the sex-related thread or the chatters converging around it) are (self-proclaimed) males, with some (self-identified) females taking part mainly as passive participants who only respond sporadically and rarely initiate sex-related topics of their own.⁵ Whether they are faking their gender identity does not change the fact that the conversations are dominated by male oriented subjects. One of the most salient topics among the chatters that demonstrate a predatory masculine culture is the one related to the female body and appearance. Many of the posts open up conversation threads that share, comment on, and fantasise the female body (with these posts mostly attached with sexual images and sometimes videos). Here are a few examples extracted from GF:

- (a) update!!EP III—8妹與果醬先生—第六回—BLACK(#6有圖)
(update!! Episode III—8 sisters with Mr. Jam—Round 6 (photos on page 6))
- (b) 我的偏好是熟婦!! 更新 P. 3, P. 6 (相), P. 9(相)
(My special interest is in mature women!! Update p. 3, p. 6 (photo), p. 9 (photo))
- (c) (一人一張)靚女j圖/醜女嘔圖
[(one photo per person) Pretty girls J photos/Ugly girls photos for vomitting]
- (d) [J time] 打造史上最強j 圖 post
([J time] creating the best J photo post in the history)
- (e) 法拉女神對咪咪真係好圓潤!!
(Goddess Fala’s boobs are so round and sleek!)
- (f) 您地覺得邊類型既女爲之”索” ?_?
(which type of girls do you think is the hottest ?_?)
- (g) 鍾唔鍾意欣賞女仔既陰部? (唔計陰毛)
(are you fond of the female private parts? excluding pubic hair)

We can identify from these examples a few types of sex chats that center on the female body. The first type are posts that share sexual materials, such as examples (a) and (b). These posts contain images of pornographic materials and are in most cases accompanied by videos or links to the relevant websites and downloading sources. These posts can easily generate conversations of over tens of pages and over 100 responses. These responses are mostly from male participants in short and spontaneous style with contents ranging from thanking the post master in sharing such material, commentaries and criticism of the material, and responses that reflect

⁵Our research shows that there is another popular forum that has active (self-proclaimed) females to initiate and participate in sex chats. In the “3boys2girls” forum, there is a specific channel allocated to chatting about female sex known as “Sex issues—female physiology” (性事—女性生理). Most of the conversation in this channel involve female participation with topics centering on curiosity about sex and the body.

the chatters’ own sex preferences and desires. The pornographic materials are mainly of Japanese sources; images from the Japanese AV (adult video) industry are hugely popular among Hong Kong male consumers. Other sources come from the U.S., Taiwan, Korea, and Mainland China.

A rather sophisticated sharing network among the male chatters for pornographic materials has been developed. The types of AV materials being circulated, for instance, consist of amateur videos which were intentionally or accidentally circulated, and professionally produced video which the chatters share online without legal permission.⁶ The posts that share the professionally produced videos are attached with the original product cover complete with product details, snapshots of the shared video, the sources from which to retrieve the material, and often a description of the main AV actress(es). This sharing culture is sophisticated, as it comes with a large variety of choices and most of all, easy accessibility like an organised archive. The chatters’ vast knowledge of and familiarity with the variety of AV materials renders the chatroom a space of productivity as well as a space of sharing and “community building.”

The second category of circulated materials is similar to the first type, in that they are posts for sharing, discussing and commenting on female bodily and sexual materials. But the chats are over the images of female celebrities and public figures. Most of them capture accidental exposure of the breasts, underwear, private parts, “upskirt” images, legs, toes, stockings, and so on. There are also images that reveal the body figure of women in swimsuit or tight clothing.

Example (e) above is a typical post that surrounds the discussion of the body of a famous female television actress in Hong Kong: Fala Chen. Chen is a Chinese-American beauty pageant queen who became a popular leading actress in one of the dominant television broadcasting studios in Hong Kong. She is among a group of other female celebrities in Hong Kong to be adored as the “Goddesses” among many Hong Kong young males. These “Goddesses” are frequent subjects of sex-related discussion.⁷ In example (e), the conversation was initiated by a discussion of Fala’s breasts, springing into dialogues that assess her body and fantasies

⁶In many occasions, the non-professionally made amateur videos were intended for self consumption only. The private sex footages were captured by personal phones with cameras and other portable recording devices. Once these phones or devices were lost the videos in them might be obtained by others and often they would be posted and circulated on the internet. As these videos are portraits of “real” sexual images, they garner a heightened attention among the forum chatters.

⁷Although there are no set criteria for the actresses to be identified as “Goddesses” among young males in Hong Kong, most of them would attain such status if they are fantasised to be “girlfriend-able” as well as enjoyable sexually. Therefore they would have attributes that can be desirable both as a girlfriend and a sex partner such as having a pretty but not too exotic face, nice personality, a bit of innocence; attractive but not over-exaggerating body figure with long legs, white skin and medium-sized breasts. Nevertheless it is difficult to define how a female celebrity would be turned into a Goddess and they could be in very different types of women catering to different tastes of these male chatters. In this way, Fala Chen matches many of these qualities, and became wildly popular on GF and other chatsites. Other widely acknowledged Goddesses include Suki Chui (TV actress), Kay Tse (pop singer), Karena Lam (movie star), etc.

of intimate and sexual relationship with her. In this example many of Chen's on-screen television images wearing a bikini and underwear that were captured by the chatters, would be repeatedly posted and commented upon.

Furthermore, in GF the female celebrity images are not only posted for discussion, but are often digitally modified—a notorious “prank culture” of GF. Successfully modified images, which means they are of high modification standard, creativity, and humor, would become very popular and would be circulated and consumed throughout the internet. In some cases they would even reach the general public through being captured by tabloid magazines. It can be seen in Hong Kong today that there is a growing interest among these popular publications towards materials originated from different online discussion forums, in particular GF for its well-known creativity in digital modifications of public figures (e.g. disgraced politicians). Some modified images with entertaining values would be further “spilled over” to the public with the aid of smartphones and other internet accessible portable devices.

The point about the power of these images being able to reverberate beyond the chatroom is an important one. Occasional episodes of moral panic can break out from the circulation of re-posted materials. An important incident of such a moral panic in Hong Kong occurred in 2008, known as the celebrity sex scandal of Edison Chen.

In January 2008, the media and the police revealed that there were different suspected sexually revealing photographs of a local male celebrity Edison Chen and other female celebrities circulating among various popular online forums in Hong Kong, including GF. The chatters found, and circulated, more and more photographs in subsequent weeks; they later found out that the photographs were actually authentic images stolen by a technician who repaired Edison Chen's malfunctioning computer containing those images. After being reported by mainstream news, the circulation of those images became more and more intense, offering chatters in forums free-for-all downloading for discussion and criticism. As Edison Chen's images involved many local female celebrity engaging in a variety of sexual posture or real sexual intercourse with him, a moral panic broke out concerning immoral behavior in the entertainment industry, as well as the immorality of those who turned these images into questionable consumption and circulation. Eventually, the police authority were involved in an investigation of alleged “sex crimes” as revealed in the photographs, and an investigation of illegal downloading and circulation of them. None of the celebrities was arrested since they all directly or indirectly admitted that the images were taken under their consent. Edison Chen, along with many of the female stars involved in the scandal, have never been able to reach the kind of stardom as before the incident. This story also shows a public awareness of the “subterranean” world of the internet chatrooms, as a site of questionable morality, especially sexual morality associated with a problematic masculine culture.

Finally, in our findings, an issue in popular chatting that might also raise questions about moral values is the chatters' fondness for sharing their experiences in visiting sex workers. In Hong Kong, the vernacular saying for visiting a sex

worker is “calling the chicken” (叫雞). There is typically an interesting interaction between those who are (claim to be) experienced in playing with “the chicken” and those who are curious but (claim to) have never had such an experience. While the latter would often post discussions that query about prostitution, the former will initiate posts that share, and often brag, about their chicken calling stories. The exchange often goes into different polarities, with some expressing a longing for developing good skills when playing, while others condemn the behavior by often teasing the participants for falling victim to AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.

An intriguing phenomenon of these “chicken posts” is that many would share their personal experiences written up as extended “reports.” These so-called reports would contain a detailed description of the whole occurrence of the incident, from the place of the brothel, the description of the female sex workers, and the whole engaging process. Sometimes these reports are presented as novellas, in which the webmaster would even add additional details into the whole story, complete with a story line, narratives of conversations, and descriptions of feelings. An example of a topic line for these sex novellas goes something like this: “[史詩式叫雞報告]—東莞的森林” (“[*Epic Chicken Calling Report*]—*Dongguan Woods*”). The Dongguan Woods novella was divided into chapters, and only a part of the story was posted, until enough chatters have gained an interest and made inquiries for further exposure of the rest of the story. Attracting attention, gain reading hits, therefore increasing the popularity of the post, are all parts of the phenomenon in shoring up a unique chatroom masculine culture. In fact, the Dongguan Woods story turned out to be based on the writer’s real life “chicken calling” experience. Because it was of such enormous popularity and because of its writing quality akin to a popular romance novel, it was made into a commercial film entitled *Due West* which was released in mid-2012.⁸

Coda

Cultural studies has long been attentive to the complex interrelation of agency, power, and the social imaginary. The cultural study of sex in cyberspace is important as a way of unpacking a certain sexo-cultural crisis whereby “despite sexual overload, there is considerable uncertainty about what we mean by sex or sexuality” (Attwood 2006, 79). “Sex chat” offers a useful site of investigation of a series of cultural contradictions that seem to reign in the cyberworld: ideas and speech that are communicated publicly among strangers, yet experienced as something intimately related to our bodies and private sexual subjectivity; an act of

⁸See the media coverage (in Chinese) of the transformation of Dongguan Woods from a GF post into a popular film: http://www1.hk.apple.nextmedia.com/template/apple/art_main.php?iss_id=20120313&sec_id=462&art_id=16150337).

presentation and representation that is produced as quickly as it is consumed; a way of constructing and deconstructing identity in the flowing time-space of the internet; an encounter that is afforded by the conjoinment of bodily and technological imaginations, yet flesh, speech, and technology seem autonomous from one another. These are the conditions for the creation of a strange but fascinating gender performance, especially the performance of “vernacular masculinity.” Thus, reading cyber-speech, gender, and “diverse eroticisms” (Attwood 2006) as inter-implicated entities is a complex interpretive task. This study attempts to open up such a model of analysis through grounded internet-based ethnography of a highly popular chat site, where a rarely studied form of masculinity may be emerging in Hong Kong.

Once again, the aim of this study is to reframe our theoretical understanding of sexual values shaped by a profoundly quotidian source of meaning-making. It is suggested here that the practice of “sex chat” among (self-identified) adult men and teenage boys variously labeled as “poisonous males,” “geeky boys,” or “lonely boys,” offers a window into Hong Kong’s changing gender culture. The increasingly varied internet experiences—as a result of commercial innovations as well as government regulations—are remaking our sexual discourse. Ultimately, it is hoped that the study of “vernacular masculine culture” can reshape the direction of gender studies in Hong Kong, placing less emphasis on well-worn ideological modes of construction of maleness (e.g. through the family, schools, sports, business environment and the media) and more on the fluid flow and interaction of sexual speech constituted out of freely unscripted lines of imagination.

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Part II
**The Young Body: Reconceptualising
Health, Illness and Recovering**

The Resisting Young Body

Nick J. Fox and Pam Alldred

Abstract Political, social policy and biomedical discourses have all too often portrayed young bodies as either victims or perpetrators of errant, aberrant or even dangerous attitudes, desires or behaviours. Such perspectives obscure the relations of power within which young bodies are socially and physically located. While sociology has explored the power nexus that surrounds young bodies' development, education, sexuality and other aspects, the character of 'resistance' to power requires further elucidation. In this chapter we take a new materialist approach to explore the affectivity of young bodies, and the flows and intensities that produce and reproduce power and resistance concerning embodiment, subjectivities, and what young bodies can do, feel and desire. To explicate young bodies' resistances, we look at two case studies that explore, respectively, diet and sexuality. In the first of these studies, we consider the transgressive pro-ana movement that resists both biomedical and social definitions of anorexia; in the second, we investigate how young bodies' sexuality provides a means to resist institutional power. These case studies suggest a need to focus upon 'resisting' as an affective movement rather than on 'resistance' as an agentic bodily attribute, with consequences both for young bodies and for sociological research.

Introduction

Social scientific perspectives on young people and their bodies generally inhabit one of two registers: celebratory or problematised (Alldred and Fox 2015; Renold and Ringose 2013, p. 247). In the former, adolescence and early adulthood is a period of both 'innocence' and maturation, with children regarded as 'human

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becomings' (Alanen 1990): unformed individuals possessing great future potential. These children transition from an under-developed body and identity into an adult mode with both physical and social capacities, including capacities for mature sexual relations (Frye et al. 2014; Moscheta et al. 2013, p. 51). This celebratory perspective is reflected in humanistic efforts to support and encourage young people on this journey into adulthood (Veugelers 2011).

Within a problematising register, young bodies are regarded either as themselves at risk or as inherently dangerous (Foucault 1981, p. 104; Sharland 2006, pp. 247–248), with young people treated as a public health problem (Benotsch et al. 2013; Mustanski et al. 2014). This is particularly the case when it comes to areas of young people's lives such as sexuality, in which young bodies are regarded as a danger to themselves or others in relation to sexually transmitted infections or unplanned pregnancies (Coleman et al. 2010; Holland et al. 1998, p. 194; Ronay and von Hippel 2010), from psychological or emotional maturational problems (Mustanski et al. 2014), or from physical or sexual abuse. Recent societal concerns over historical child sexual abuse (Mendelson and Letourneau 2015), sexting and cybersex (Levine 2013; Mitchell et al. 2014), and the use of pornography by teenagers (Bale 2011) reflect a general unease about young bodies and their sexuality (Benotsch et al. 2013) and makes links between young people and three contemporary concerns—sexting, substance use and sexual behaviour.

These rival celebratory and problematising discourses on young bodies may be criticised for how they generate under-theorised 'empowerment' and 'protectionist' policy agendas respectively, for example in relation to sex education (Alldred and David 2007, p. 9). Furthermore, both may be regarded as based in essentialist, individualistic and anthropocentric conceptions of young people's agency (Coffey and Farrugia 2014), with youth sociologies debating variously the relative weights and influences of agency and structure upon the processes of being young and growing up (ibid). Neither discourse offers a nuanced understanding of how young bodies are located within social and physical contexts, of the power relations that surround them as a consequence, or of resistance to these power relations.

The emergence of 'new' materialisms in the social sciences (Coole and Frost 2010; van der Tuin and Dolphijn 2010) supplies the opportunity to cut across the dualisms that turn a young body into either a problem or celebration; that require a policy response that is either empowering or paternalistic; and are predicated on either the self-actualising capacities of agency or the determining impositions of social structures. In this chapter, we use this new materialist perspective to look at young bodies, power and resistance by focusing firmly upon 'matter' and its social and physical production across cultural and natural realms. This approach shifts attention away from human bodies and individuals, on to the intra-actions within material assemblages of bodies, things, ideas and social institutions, and focuses both upon the constraining forces of these assembled elements on bodies, and upon the capacities for resistance these assemblages produce (Fox 2012; Fox and Alldred 2013). We will look at young bodies within the 'web of forces, intensities and encounters' (Braidotti 2006, p. 41) between human and non-human elements that produce multiple 'territorialising' and 'aggregating' manifestations of power on the

bodies of young people, but also, importantly, continual challenges, fragmentations and resistances to these territorialisations.

To explore this new materialist analysis of resisting young bodies, we consider two case studies drawn from our own research. First we examine Nick's study (Fox et al. 2005) of how young bodies in the 'pro-anorexia' or 'pro-ana' movement used weight management and social support to take control of their lives. The second case study looks at Pam's analysis (Alldred and David 2007) of how teenage boys appropriated the 'rhizomic' capacities of their sexuality to challenge the constraining forces of their daily immersion in an educational system that had—by and large—branded them as failures and even outcasts. Before that, we outline the new materialist perspective and how it may be used to explore the materiality of young resisting bodies.

Power and Resistance: A New Materialist Perspective

The deployment of power within the social institutions of modern societies, and resistance to it, have been a focus of attention for social theorists from Karl Marx and Max Weber to the present (Giddens 1981, p. 49). Weber understood power as a dynamic struggle between an individual or group's aspirations to achieve specific goals and others' resistance (Weber 1968, p. 53). This struggle was increasingly reflected in a bureaucratic regime of control over independent actions (Weber 1964, p. 338), that he characterised as an 'iron cage' in which resistance was virtually impossible. Marx, by contrast saw power always as relational, as a process by which material social relations are exerted: by one class over another, or by the state upon a certain class (Nigam 1996, pp. 8–9).

Explorations of the material workings of power and resistance have also been key within the post-structuralist turn in the social sciences, during the latter decades of the 20th century. Foremost in this re-assessment was Foucault's (1980) association of power with knowledge, and of technologies of power associated with systems of thought, while post-structuralist scholarship was also informed by feminist, post-colonialist and queer theory perspectives on oppression and resistance (Braidotti 2006, p. 27; Butler 1990; Fox 1993; Game 1991) that provided a more nuanced understanding of power than the class analysis of Marxism. Post-structuralism considered the economic determinism of Marx's historical materialism inadequate to critique satisfactorily the power relations they saw within patriarchy, science and modernism, or to supply a critical and radical stance to underpin struggles for social justice and plurality by oppressed individuals and groups (Bonnell and Hunt 1999, p. 8; Braidotti 2006, pp. 24–25; Game 1991, p. 12). Power was no longer regarded as a unitary, coercive 'downward' force upon citizens, but instead as a disseminated disciplinary process aiming at modifying individual conduct, and even as productive of specific human subjectivities and bodily dispositions (Fox 2012, pp. 134–136).

The 'new' materialisms that have emerged recently within the social sciences and humanities endorsed the post-structuralist disinterest in theorising coercive power, but have focused firmly upon social production rather than social construction, and upon matter rather than textuality (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 7; Taylor and Ivanson 2013, p. 666). Drawing on a very wide range of disparate philosophical, feminist and social theory perspectives (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 5; Lemke 2015), these new materialisms recognise materiality as plural and complex, uneven and contingent, relational and emergent (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 29). Importantly, however, they do not recapitulate sociology's earlier materialism, and the material factors implicated in producing the world and human history extend far beyond the structural forces regarded as the drivers of social change in historical materialism. The world and history are produced by a range of material forces that extend from the physical and the biological to the psychological, social and cultural (Barad 1996, p. 181; Braidotti 2013, p. 3); consequently this is a project that

foregrounds an appreciation of just what it means to exist as a material individual with biological needs yet inhabiting a world of natural and artificial objects, well-honed micro-powers of governmentality, but no less compelling effects of international economic structures. (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 28)

This breadth of scope radically extends materialist analysis beyond traditional concerns with structural and 'macro' level social phenomena (van der Tuin and Dolphijn 2010, p. 159), to address issues often regarded as 'micro-sociological', because of their association with how thoughts, desires, feelings and abstract concepts contribute to social production (Braidotti 2000, p. 159; DeLanda 2006, p. 5). From the new materialist perspective, power is understood not as a 'top-down' imposition by economic and social forces upon people's actions and lives (as conceptualised in historical materialism). Instead, it is a phenomenon that is revealed and deployed at the very local level of actions and events; as Foucault (2000, p. 340) put it, power 'acts on actions'.

Consequently, if we are to understand the working of power (and of resistance to power) from this perspective, we need to look at its operation at this localised level, focusing on actions, interactions and events. Similarly, from a new materialist perspective we need to seek and explore resistance not in social movements or in political or philosophical propositions, but in the daily actions and encounters between people, things and social formations. Thus, for example, the gendered expressions of power and oppression between young people in school settings are explained not by invoking abstracted structural forces conventionally labelled as 'patriarchy' or 'hegemonic masculinity', but by exploring the micropolitics of material forces and intensities within an assemblage of classmates, teachers, the school environment, the media, pornography and so on, that manifest around events such as sexist behaviour or homophobic posturing by teenage boys (Alldred and Fox 2015).

To develop the features of new materialism that impact upon power and resistance, we will use the well-developed and widely-applied conceptual framework deriving from Gilles Deleuze's (1988) materialist reading of Spinoza, as developed

and applied in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 1988), by social and feminist scholars such as Braidotti (2006), DeLanda (2006), Grosz (1994) and Thrift (2004), and by social researchers such as Fox and Alldred (2013, 2014), Renold and Ringrose (2011) and Youdell and Armstrong (2011). This DeleuzoGuattarian approach is predicated upon three propositions, concerning relationality; agency; and the effects of power and resistance on bodies.

Firstly, new materialism asserts the fundamental *relationality* of all matter: bodies, things and social formations gain their apparent 'is-ness' only through their relationship to other similarly contingent and ephemeral bodies, things and ideas (Deleuze 1988, p. 123; Haraway 1991, p. 201). Actions and events are *assemblages* (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 88) of these relations that develop 'in a kind of chaotic network of habitual and non-habitual connections, always in flux, always reassembling in different ways' (Potts 2004: 19). For instance a 'sexuality-assemblage' accrues around an event such as an erotic kiss, which comprises not just two pairs of lips but also physiological processes, personal and cultural contexts, aspects of the setting, memories and experiences, sexual codes and norms of conduct, and potentially many other relations particular to that event (Alldred and Fox 2015).

Second, a conventional conception of (human) agency is replaced with the Spinozist notion of *affect* (Deleuze 1988: 101), meaning simply the capacity to affect or be affected. In an assemblage, there is no 'subject' and no 'object' (Anderson 2010, p. 736), and all matter has an 'agential' capacity to *affect*, rather than being inert clay moulded by human agency, consciousness and imagination (Barad 1996, p. 181; Coole and Frost 2010, p. 2); this assessment de-privileges human agency as the means by which the social world is produced and reproduced. An affect is a 'becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 256) that represents a change of state or capacities of an entity (Massumi 1988, p. xvi)—this change may be physical, psychological, emotional or social. Affects produce further affective capacities within assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 400), and because one affect can produce more than one capacity, social production is 'rhizomic' (ibid: 7) rather than linear: a branching, reversing, coalescing and rupturing flow.

Third, the workings of power are explained at the level of assemblages, in terms of what might be seen as a microphysics of affects and 'territories' (Fox and Alldred 2015). The affects within assemblages act on bodies, things and social formations to alter their capacities (to affect other relations in the assemblage) in one direction or another (Duff 2010, p. 625); consequently every body, object, idea, subjectivity or other relation can be understood as a territory, produced and fought over by rival affects within assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 88–89). If an affect 'de-territorialises' a body, it may open up new possibilities for what bodies can do and desire, and may produce a *line of flight* (ibid, p. 9) from a stable state or identity into a new realm of novel assemblages.

Some territorialising affects may aggregate relations (Deleuze and Guattari called these aggregative forces 'molar'), while other affects are non-aggregative or 'singular' ('molecular' in Deleuze and Guattari's vocabulary), affecting a single relation in a unique way. So, for example, naming a new pet kitten is a singular

territorialising affect, while categorising it as tabby or tortoiseshell is aggregative. Sociologically, aggregative forces include systems of thought or discourses, orthodoxies, evaluative categorisations, codifications, cultural norms and so forth (Fox and Alldred 2013, p. 776; Potts 2004, p. 20), all of which are mediated within assemblages by the ideas, concepts, thoughts and feelings that affect actions and interactions.

Power and resistance are thus explained through the dual processes of territorialisation/de-territorialisation and aggregation/dis-aggregation of events and actions. Though territorialisation and aggregation may be the means whereby relations in assemblages assert control and thus power over other relations, it is not the case that resistance is always associated with de-territorialisation and dis-aggregation. For example, anyone can trade with anyone in the 'neoliberal' free market, so a capitalist market place is a highly de-territorialised space (Deleuze and Guattari 1984, p. 222). Resisting the forces of the free market may actually entail individual consumers aggregating together and territorialising themselves as a 'workers' collective' that refuses to accept the anarchy of the marketplace. It is therefore more accurate to see power and resistance as dual fluxes that permeate all assemblages, a shifting balance that is never finally settled.

We will now use these concepts to explore two case studies of young resisting bodies.

Pro-ana: Resisting Body Governance

Anorexia nervosa is a medical diagnosis most often applied to young females who use fasting and stringent food restriction to achieve a radically slim body shape (Wolf 1991). Anorexia is perceived by contemporary health professionals as a highly dangerous condition; by social psychologists as a problem of self-esteem, identity development or familial relations; and by social scientists and feminists as a reaction against Western cultural preoccupations with female body shape and/or patriarchy (Bordo 1993). The pro-anorexia or 'pro-ana' movement is a radical and largely socially-unacceptable approach to the management of anorexia that has sought to re-define it outside medical or other professional discourses, and has suffered a powerful media backlash, being characterised as encouraging 'normal' and 'healthy' girls and women to adopt anorexia as a glorified diet (Dias 2003; Doward and Reilly 2003). It has been facilitated by the development of Internet communication technology, and subsists within a shadowy world of semi-underground chat rooms and web sites which are often closed down by Internet service providers following approaches from those regarding the movement as dangerous.

Nick's ethnographic study of pro-ana Internet communities and websites during the 2000s (Fox et al. 2005) offered a sociological analysis of the movement as a challenge to, and a rejection of medical, social and feminist models that regard anorexia as a condition to be 'cured'. It focused on the pseudonymous '*Anagrll*' website and forum, which—despite having been closed down and re-opened under

different names several times—was a thriving, supportive and lively community at the time of the research. The users—who posted on a daily basis to multiple ‘threads’—were overwhelmingly female, mostly between 17 and 20, in full time education or working part time, and predominantly from the US, UK, New Zealand and Australia. The methodology used was ‘virtual participant observation’: the project’s research officer Katie Ward subscribed to *Anagrrl*, announced her ‘presence’, and explained that she was researching Internet web fora supporting weight loss. She participated actively in the forum, asking questions of message board participants; some responded to the questions via the message board, while others chose to e-mail Katie directly, which then led to in-depth online interviews; a total of 20 participants were interviewed by these various methods.

This study found that participants in the pro-ana movement saw anorexia as a legitimate way to assert some control over the problems and troubles of daily life, and one that could be sustained while at the same time remaining physically healthy. In a disturbed life, the ‘anti-recovery’ stance of the pro-ana movement provided its members with a safe and positive place to share experience and gain further insight into their condition, away from the territorialising and aggregating judgements, gaze and scrutiny of parents, friends, boyfriends, husbands and the medical profession. The site offered an array of information relating to anorexia and the pro-ana movement, recipes to promote healthy anorectic eating, advice on nutritional supplements to sustain well-being, and ‘*thinspiration*’: ‘triggering’ photographs of slim celebrities to inspire and sustain anorectic behaviour. An asynchronous message forum provided a busy interactive area where participants exchanged ideas, provided support and shared experiences, achievements and perceived failings. It was described by some participants as a ‘sanctuary’ where they were not continually pressured to eat and gain weight, while the website creator ‘Lily’ described pro-ana as a means to enable participants to take an active role in living with what society considered a debilitating, dangerous and shameful disease.

This data has been fully reported elsewhere (Fox et al. 2005), and we do not recapitulate this analysis here; instead we consider the data in terms of the ‘pro-ana assemblage’ and the possibilities for resistance that it provides to those in the movement. To this end, and following the DeleuzoGuattarian ontology outlined earlier, we might conjecture an anorexia assemblage that comprises at least:

Body—food—diet—body image—social environment—cultural forces—media—significant others

Beyond this ‘core’ of relations, people with anorexia may be territorialised by other relations in the assemblage, which produce much of the experience and course of their anorexic lives. For example, if they come to the attention of parents and health professionals, biomedical ideas, re-feeding diets and regimes, treatment strategies, health facilities and even genetics may become part of the assemblage; if involved with psychotherapy or counselling, the assemblage will include psychological perspectives on self-esteem, empowerment, social development and so forth.

The data from Nick's study suggested that while the people in the pro-ana movement may have been previously caught up in these medical, psychological or feminist assemblages, their involvement in the movement drew them into a distinctive pro-ana assemblage with very different flows and territorialisations. It may be summarised as:

Body—food—diet—pro-ana philosophy—other anorexic people—thinspiration—recipes—health

While medical, psychological and feminist assemblages aimed to help sufferers to recover from an illness by gaining weight and addressing the underlying causes of disordered eating, in this pro-ana assemblage, the aim was not to recover, but to maintain both low body weight and good health, through a balanced diet and the use of dietary supplements, and within a supportive environment of like-minded people who recognised anorexia as a legitimate response to the troubles of daily life. As one respondent suggested: '... maybe one day I will be ready for recovery but I certainly am not yet', while another commented 'I don't want to die to escape my ed [eating disorder], I want to die to escape life. But, I'm trying to meet life head on, I use my ed to bolster me through.'

The materialist ontology we are using here seems particularly appropriate in a case study where 'matter' is so central: for anorexic people the body is 'matter out of place' (Douglas 1984), and losing body mass is a means (as one participant put it) to 'sink from view', out of lives that seem fraught with troubles. Whereas relations in biomedical or other traditional approaches to resolving anorexia aim to territorialise and thereby reverse these desires, the physical and conceptual relations in the pro-ana assemblage produce different circulations and flows of matter that provide the means to keep pro-anas alive and anorexic. Rather than becoming 'expert patients' within a medical or biopsychosocial explanatory model, pro-anas use the de-territorialisations provided by the pro-ana resources (recipes, thinspiration, support) to resist the forces that would lead to weight gain, and establish an alternative way of being anorexic, and a line of flight away from the troubles of daily life. If, as the participants studied here suggested, anorexia is a resistance against life and its troubles, then we may also conclude from our analysis that pro-ana is itself a second resistance against the forces of mainstream society that attempts to re-territorialise people with anorexia into a normative body shape. We take this up in the discussion.

Young Male Sexuality: Resisting Education

The second case study that we look at here explores how the sexualities and sexual conduct of teen boys provide an embodied, materialist resource for resistance to authority. The data we present here is drawn from a multi-methods study of sex and relationship education (SRE) teaching in UK secondary schools, conducted by Pam and her colleague Miriam David in the early 2000s (Alldred and David 2007).

This study gathered data using individual and group interviews with teachers and teenage girls and boys, both those in school or (in the case of boys who had been excluded from school for unacceptable conduct or truancy) in alternative educational settings. We have reported some of this data in our wider study of young male sexuality-assemblages (Allred and Fox 2015); to explore resistance we focus here on data from the interviews with teen boys.

Conventionally, sexuality and sexual pleasures have been considered as aspects of human life that offer the opportunity for self-expression and an escape from the routines and regimes of daily life, perhaps even as a bulwark against the de-personalising influences of modernity (Giddens 1992, p. 3). Such humanist and essentialist 'enticements' (Grosz and Probyn 1995, p. xiii) have been questioned by post-humanist and post-structuralist social theory (Braidotti 2013, p. 23), and sexuality has been re-thought not as an essence but as always shaped by social contexts and discourses (Grosz 1995; Kaite 1988). A number of authors have applied new materialist perspectives to sexuality (Beckman 2011; Fox and Allred 2013; Holmes et al. 2010; Renold and Ringrose 2011; Ringrose 2011). Braidotti (2011, p. 148) has described sexuality as a 'complex, multi-layered force that produces encounters, resonances and relations of all sorts', while in our recent work (Fox and Allred 2013, p. 739) we theorised sexualities as 'assemblages of bodies, things, ideas and social institutions, which produces sexual (and other) capacities in bodies'. Sexuality-assemblages bridge 'micro' and 'macro', private and public, intimacy and polity, and establish the capacities of individual bodies to do, feel and desire. In short, it is a sexuality-assemblage that is productive of all phenomena associated with the physical and social manifestations of sex and sexuality.

To explore teenage children's attitudes and responses to SRE teaching, and specifically the resistance to SRE classes by teen boys noted in Pam's study, a new materialist approach focuses on the assemblages, affects and territorialisations that shaped their lives inside and outside the classroom. For these boys, physical relations such as bodily maturation, height, voices that had 'broken' and facial hair territorialised childish bodies into adolescence and adulthood. Bigger and more physically and sexually mature boys used these physical affects in interactions with peers. Even during the study interviews, competitive and hierarchical displays of strength and machismo, physical intimidation within the peer group, and (often tall) tales of sexual bravado were used to territorialise—and effectively rank—their bodies in terms of claimed sexual experience, sexual knowledgeability and confidence (for instance, by being able to demonstrate condom use in an SRE class, or by 'lusting after' girls). Together these relations and affects produced a teen boy/SRE class sexuality-assemblage comprising at least

Boys—girls—siblings—SRE curriculum—wider school environment—teachers—condoms—sexual encounters and pleasures—second-hand cars—ideas of masculinity

It was within this sexuality-assemblage that SRE classes were taught, and also from within which the boys' resistance to the classes was resourced. Both boys and girls objected to participating in values and relationship discussions in classroom

settings and to the expected interactions within the peer group and with teachers during these classes, which they found embarrassing, an invasion of privacy and none of the school's business (Alldred and David 2007, pp. 88–90). The boys resisted expectations that they should discuss sexual and emotional issues with teachers or parents, preferring 'mates', a family member such as an older brother, or an outside facilitator not associated with their other school educational activities. While teen boys in school in general supported SRE, for those excluded and in alternative educational provision, the SRE curriculum seemed irrelevant: for one teenage boy in the latter group, SRE could be reduced to a simple message about bodies, condoms and medical risks.

Sex is safe as long as you use a condom, you're safe. That's all that you need to know.

Boys were often seen as disruptive in SRE classes, and a materialist analysis of the micropolitics of territorialisations and de-territorialisations between relations in this assemblage can be used to make sense of this resistance to SRE. As Paechter (2006, p. 122) has argued, school is a place where children's bodies (including or perhaps especially their sexualities) are sidelined or even erased as part of the disciplinary regime. Consequently, SRE classes are unusual: rather than erasing bodies, sexual desire and arousal become the topic for education (Alldred and David 2007, p. 96). This afforded a specific opportunity for resistance by these teenage boys as they sought to resist both the tedium of the classroom and reject the values and educational discourses that had produced them as academic failures and outcasts from school.

The primary resources for this resistance were their own bodies, the sexual capacities these had physically and expressively, and the embodied pleasures of sexuality. Sexual bodies were highly affective in these class settings, and the means whereby educational agendas might be substituted by displays of pubescent male sexuality, banter, sexist and homophobic jokes and horseplay, often at the expense of their female classmates. This might amount to low-level sexual display, as noted in this extract from a focus group interview.

Interviewer Would you rather do sex education with the girls or [just with] the boys?

Boy 2 The girls

Interviewer Is that just so you can flirt with them?

Boy 2 No, not really, [*laughing*] you just sit next to them until you get a stiff on!

Even the research interviews conducted by Pam were treated as further opportunities to assert 'adult' (hetero) sexualities through sexual banter and horseplay, subverting a research agenda that they equated with a hegemonic educational regime.

The physiology of male sexual desire and heterosexual experience or prowess thus supplied a material de-territorialisation for the boys excluded from school, away from their unsuccessful educational identities into alternative 'adult' sexual

identities. These boys' lives had been territorialised by school and by their educational failure, closing down possibilities for action. In an adult, disciplinary world, they had little room for manoeuvre, and even their bad behaviour had rebounded, leading to exclusion from school and further limiting their opportunities. The subversion of SRE classes and the educational system served as one minor de-territorialisation that enables some resistance to the system that had rejected them. Sexuality, and specifically these boys' physical capacities for sexual arousal, provided the material means for this de-territorialisation.

However, were we tempted to regard this act of resistance as some kind of line of flight, it is also worth noting that these expressions of masculine sexuality were at the same time re-territorialisations and aggregations into a highly conventional masculinity. Physical maturation, actual or purported familiarity with heterosexual activity, competitive homophobic posturing and (hetero) sexualised banter (witnessed in both the SRE classes and during the study focus groups) territorialised these school-excluded teen boys within a depressingly familiar aggregated masculinity that valorised heterosexuality, homophobia and misogyny. This is the affect economy that some scholars have described as 'compulsory heterosexuality' and 'hegemonic masculinity' (Holland et al. 1998, p. 149; Mac and Ghail 1994, p. 96), a conventional and quite narrow manifestation of sexuality. This provides a further materialist insight into power and resistance which we will examine in the ensuing discussion.

Discussion

As was noted earlier, power is one of the most widely used and diversely theorised concepts in sociology. Its obverse resistance is perhaps less thought through, though it is foundational both to humanistic and romantic conceptualisations of the human condition and to the range of critical and 'engaged' social science positions including feminist, queer and post-colonial activism to post-structuralist and critical realist social theory (Braidotti 2011, p. 268; Foucault 1980, p. 56; Game 1991, p. 29; Raby 2005; Thomas and Davies 2005).

The two case studies we have considered in this chapter provide insights into power and resistance as viewed from a new materialist perspective. The first of these explored the 'double resistance' of anorexic bodies in the pro-ana assemblage. From a materialist perspective, these young bodies were resisting first in terms of a refusal to allow matter in the form of food to translate into matter in the form of body tissue, against norms of human behaviour that are arguably both biologically and socially programmed into human bodies. The second resistance was to the normative discourses deriving from biomedical, psychological, cultural and feminist theories of anorexia, all of which in their different ways seek to territorialise the anorexic body as needing to be healed in one way or another, and hence returned to a 'normal' weight. The young women in *Anagrrl* used a range of material forces (from dietary recipes, inspiring pictures of very thin bodies and the strength of a collective outlook) to resist the power of these mainstream belief-systems.

The second case study explored a struggle between a well-meaning group of teachers, health professionals and sex and relationship educationalists and a relatively disempowered group of teenagers. The data focused upon the resistance of teen boys, and even more specifically upon a dispossessed and physically-outcast group of boys in alternative educational provision. In this rather uneven encounter between an establishment and a group of outsiders, what the data revealed was a group drawing, perhaps rather desperately, upon one of the only material resources left to them, their masculine sexuality, and even their biological capacities for sexual arousal. While focused against SRE, their real target was the educational system that had turned them into failures, materially affecting their social position and potential.

We would argue that the new materialist, DeleuzoGuattarian ontology that we adopted to analyse these case studies provides some novel insights into both power and resistance. In both cases, we explored not bodies and their 'agency' but arrangements of material relations and the affectivities that drew these into assemblage, and assessed the micropolitics of the affective flows—territorialisations, de-territorialisations and re-territorialisations—in these assemblages, and the capacities these produced in bodies. This ontology has three consequences. First, at a stroke, it decentres human agency, which is so often cast into opposition to the power invested in 'social structure' in conventional sociological analysis, from the assessment of power and resistance. Second, by replacing an emphasis upon ontologically-prior entities (for instance, a body, a classroom, food, a skinny celebrity) with a focus on the ways an event or an action draws disparate relations into assemblage, it places in question notions of a fixed stable reality in which power is asserted and resistance mounted. Third, attention to the micropolitics and microphysics of assemblages means that all that needs to be understood can be explained in terms of the ways any relation affects or is affected, that is, in terms of the forces circulating in assemblage and the consequent capacities that are produced in assembled relations, including human bodies and subjectivities.

From this, we can derive a perspective on power and resistance that recognises both as transient, fluctuating phenomena. Post-structuralism questioned the idea of a coercive 'top-down' power, arguing instead the power in the contemporary world is disciplinary or governmental, productive of subjectivities and dispositions (Foucault 1979; Fox 1993, pp. 27–28; Rose 1999). We consider that the new materialist perspective we have used to analyse the two cases of resisting young bodies in this chapter goes further, to criticise as a reification this notion of power as something that 'acts on actions', and similarly to question 'resistance' as a 'thing' that stands against this reified power. What the case studies reveal are the transitory affects that shape an event (for instance, pressure upon an anorexic person to eat at a family meal, or encouragement to participate during an SRE classroom discussion of homosexuality), and the similarly transient effects of rival forces in the assemblage (using thinspiration to encourage fasting, or the competitive heterosexual banter in the SRE class) that get labelled as 'resistance'. These labels offer the impression of much more concerted social processes, whereas often the flux of forces in assemblages can shift the capacities of bodies or collections of bodies from

moment to moment. It also romanticises the notion of a gallant resistance, whereas again such movements may be sporadic and transitory in effect.

We do not deny of course that there may be continuity to social processes (for example, the troubles with living described by the pro-ana people in Nick's study, or the social exclusion of the teen boys in Pam's)—continuities that have led social scientists to develop concepts such as neo-liberalism, patriarchy, biomedicine, hegemonic masculinity and so on to describe structures and systems. But rather than presenting events as examples of coercive or disciplinary power, what may be important is to document how transient assemblages are stabilised, what material forces enable certain relations to consistently territorialise others, and how bodies are forced to resist in more and more obscure and desperate ways.

This chapter set out to explore resisting young bodies, and we conclude by suggesting that this phraseology is appropriate: to emphasise 'resisting' as a process, an affective movement, not 'resistance' as some kind of agentic attribute of a body. The value of the materialist approach rests in understanding individual bodies or human subjects not as in themselves agents, but as part of a material, micropolitical field within which bodies, subjectivities and their capacities to act, desire and feel are assembled. These bodily capacities provide the means whereby bodies can 'have power' or can 'resist'; however, these capacities are always contingent, produced and reproduced by the ever-changing fluxes in assemblages. We would commend to readers the opportunities afforded by the new materialist ontology we have used here to explore the materialities of young people's lives, to make sense of the affects in the events and actions in their lives, and to document the how, where and what of resisting bodies.

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Girls and Sexting: The Missing Story of Sexual Subjectivity in a Sexualized and Digitally-Mediated World

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Abstract For girls coming of age in a sexualized and digitally-mediated culture, sexting is not uncommon. While self-sexualizing through technology tends to be framed as risk behavior, not all girls are affected in the same way. For some, creating sexualized content using digital media provides opportunities for sexual exploration. However, among feminist scholars, debates concerning girls' sexual empowerment persist. Many argue that despite professed empowerment, girls' participation in creating sexually-explicit material reinforces gender/sexual scripts borne out of a male gaze. Others contend that self-sexualization may be necessary for girls' sexuality development in a world that magnifies concerns over female sexuality and circumscribes its expression. Missing from debates is consideration of girls' embodied sexual experiences, including theorization of sexual pleasure as a holistic force that merges body, mind and culture. Using feminist new materialist and embodiment theory, this chapter unpacks dominant narratives shaping girls' sexualities and presents an alternate conceptualization of sexuality as an emergent force that materializes through the interactivity of biology, psyche, and society. Applying an intersectional lens that reveals how "the girl" in this discourse operates as an unmarked (white, heteronormative) category, we argue for the need to focus on diversely-located experiences of sexual pleasure, including sexting and self-sexualizing generally, as stepping stones to sexual empowerment in a digitally-mediated, sexist climate.

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Introduction

Adolescent girls' sexuality is increasingly taking place in digital culture. In 2007, the American Psychological Association (APA) set up a task force to address critical gaps in knowledge surrounding young women's experiences of their sexualities in a sexualized world. The resulting report, which concluded that sexualization has negative effects on girls' mental and physical health and healthy sexuality development, generated extensive media coverage and sparked heated academic debate around girls' sexual victimization/empowerment in an era of sexualization. In Westernized contexts, the proliferation of digital media, and personal communication technologies, in particular, has amplified concerns over girls' wellbeing. Adolescents spend upwards of seven hours a day with some form of media, from movies and music to magazines and television, with a significant portion of this content containing hyper-sexualized imagery or messages (Strasburger et al. 2012). Digital media, especially smartphone use, allows girls to communicate, consume, and create sexualized content.

One example of the creation of sexualized media content that lies at the center of girls' exploration of sexuality in a digital culture is 'sexting'. Sexting—the transmission of sexually explicit material via text message—entered the vernacular in Canada when it became Macleans' (a Canadian current affairs magazine) "word of the year" in 2009. It is estimated that by late adolescence, sexting is a common practice used by girls (and boys) as a way to attract or maintain a partner, get sexual attention, or experiment sexually. The prevalence of sexting increases as girls age and enter into intimate partnerships, suggesting that sexting is one means by which girls actively come to know and construct their sexual selves in technologically mediated societies.

This chapter begins by acknowledging that discussions of girls' self-sexualization, of which sexting is one example, are constrained by fear and morality. Resultantly, little is known about how girls navigate the blurry boundaries between sexual objectification and empowerment in a sexualized world. Situating sexting within the sexualization literature, we revisit what sexualization is, nuancing the concept, then turn to address what expert concerns about sexualization and specifically, sexting, might be missing. While taking the literature seriously, we offer a careful critique that illuminates how sexualization, particularly through digital media, may give girls some capacity to see themselves both as *sexual objects* (or recipients of others' desires) and as sexual *subjects* who actively explore their sexual feelings and sensations even as they negotiate the gendered contexts of their lives and commodification of their bodies. We recognize that arguing for sexual expression through sexualization might be seen as staging girls' victimization but we aim to tease out fine distinctions—points of dissonance and resonance—between objectification and girls' fulsome sexuality development. In a sexist cultural landscape which historically has suppressed and regulated female sexualities, sexting may provide an important starting point to examine girls' empowered and disempowered sexualities—as these exist in tension and are simultaneously experienced. Opportunities for sexual

visibility that sexting affords thus offers clues to how feminists might support girls' in advancing their sexuality rights and justice. Using feminist new materialist and embodiment theory, we examine what the sexualization literature may be missing: acknowledgement of girls as emergent sexual beings. We argue that affirming girls' nascent sexual desires in ways that expand possibilities for sexual expression is *paramount* for girls' positive sexuality development.

Narratives of Risk and Concern

Responses to sexting in health, legal, education, and media spheres have focused almost exclusively on its "inherent" dangers. For example, research linking sexting and sexual behavior has found correlations between sexting and increased participation in risky sexual activity (unprotected sex and using substances before sex), and having a higher lifetime number of sexual partners (Benotsch et al. 2013). This literature, which reflects that sexting is simply another avenue through which sexually active youth engage in sexual exploration, is used to justify the regulation of girls' (but not boys') sexualities. Like other sexual activities, sexting is embedded within a gendered narrative; girls are more likely to be asked to send sexually explicit imagery (and to do so), while boys are more likely to receive and forward these sexts (Temple et al. 2012). Girls also report experiences of "slut shaming" whereby they are chastised or harassed if others make their sexting behaviors public (PEW Research Centre 2010). While sexting as a tool of exploitation is reportedly rare (Wolak et al. 2012), risk studies underscore a sensationalized narrative that, in a sexualized world, girls are in imminent danger. Little credence is paid to girls as active agents within their sexting interactions, including girls' own meanings of and motivations for sexting.

None of this research supports the supposition that sexting *itself* is damaging. Undeterred by the lack of evidence, expert responses present a carefully constructed risk narrative (American Psychological Association 2010; Bailey 2011; Papadopolous 2010) that is laden with inferences that girls aren't naturally sexual and that their sexual expression should be prevented to protect health rather than promoted in the context of consensual and exploratory practices. The risk narrative is nothing new; throughout the 20th century, girls have been subject to fear-based responses to their sexual expression (Angelides 2012). From the advent of polaroid cameras, to drive-in theaters, to personal computers, adult anxieties about who can access girls' sexualities have informed educational and policy initiatives. Inherent in these is the fear that girls' expressions of sexuality are damaging. Scholars have noted that predominant risk narratives surrounding youth sexting are saturated with a romanticised, socially constructed view of childhood which does not provide space for emergent experiences of sexual experimentation and empowerment (Lamb and Peterson 2012; Tolman 2012). When protective responses are not informed by girls' own embodied experiences of sexuality, our ability to advocate and create space for girls to foster those sexualities is reduced.

Examining girls' sexting interactions from a feminist embodiment lens—which posits that sexualities as embodied experiences and processes materialize in the interactions of psyches, bodies and ecosocial contexts (Grosz 1994; Krieger 2005)—may provide a starting point to deconstruct the risk rhetoric that saturates current responses to sexualization. Sexualization is a portmanteau word for “sexual socialization” which connotes two important meanings. Sexualization, as popularly understood, is to make something sexual in character or quality. For example, in popular culture sexualized images sell sexy bodies as a source of female pleasure and power. Often inextricably linked with narratives of female power, images of sexed-up bodies tether power to desirability in sexualized culture. In this sense, the concerns over sexualization are justified as they speak to a potentially damaging imposition of sexuality onto individuals. When girls are positioned as sexual objects, without their embodied sexual experiences taken into consideration, sexualization has been shown to have adverse effects, including eating distress, depression, low self esteem, and negative body image (Frederickson and Roberts 1997; Tiggmann and Slater 2001). However, an emphasis on damaging impacts, though important, becomes problematic if it is the exclusive focus as it reaffirms the narrative that girls' sexual exploration can only invite victimization. This negative framing is also harmful because it ignores sexualization in its second sense: as a process by which girls become aware of their sexualities; self-sexualize; and experiment with taking pleasure in their *desirability* as an avenue to experiencing and coming to know their *desires* (Rice 2014).

Missing Narratives of Agency, Subjectivity and Difference

It is undeniable that youth are, more than ever, being raised in a sexualized/pornified world that is likely to have an impact on their sexual development. However, risk narratives fail to take into consideration girls' experiences as sexual beings and in so doing, may undermine their capacities for sexual expression. In our reading of the literature, concerns over sexualization and by extension, sexting, can be critiqued on three grounds: (1) for ignoring girls' sexual agency (Lerum and Dworkin 2009); (2) for denying their sexual subjectivity (Egan and Hawkes 2009); and (3) for overlooking complex cultural meanings given to race, disability, and other embodied differences in sexualized exchanges and imagery (Rice 2014).

Ignoring Girls' Sexual Agency: Missing from the sexualization and sexting critiques is a narrative of girls' sexual agency. By sexual agency we mean girls' abilities to explore their sexual feelings, sensations, wants, and intentions, to define their sexual ethics, and to experiment with their capacities for action in sexual spaces and interactions. In a context where many girls are allotted limited space to explore their sexualities, it may be that sexualization in its second sense—that is, becoming aware of one's sexual desires (or lack of desire), such as by experiencing oneself as desirable—could have positive meaning and value for some, if not many, girls. When concerns over sexualization focus only on how (certain) bodies are objectified

and fail to acknowledge the multi-layered meanings that sexualization might hold for girls, they miss important opportunities to advance girls' sexuality justice, such as by promoting ways for young women to express their desirability/desires while still feeling in control of their bodies and sexualities. Sexting, as one example of sexualization, may enable some girls to enact sexual agency by imaging themselves as desirable and/or by beginning to identify and articulate their desires. As some scholars suggest, being sexually validated through digital media creation may enable some girls to recognize and assert their desires more readily offline (Albury and Crawford 2012; Bond 2010).

Denying Girls' Sexual Subjectivity: Girls' own perspectives on sexuality are often excluded from sexting and sexualization debates. Concerned responses to girls' sexting and critiques of sexualized imagery that fail to account for girls' sexual sensations, decision making, and experiences of desire/desirability end up perpetuating the myth that girls should remain sexually pure and innocent. The purity myth assumes that sexuality as an embodied force emerges only when children become adults instead of surfacing and dissipating as a lifelong occurrence. This is why, when girls begin to emulate sexualized images as means of understanding and experimenting with their sexualities, they are typecast as skanks or sluts. Our cultural desire to preserve the myth that girls aren't sexual prevents them from developing confidence in their sexual decision-making and provides them a little space for important becoming into greater sexual subjectivity, curiosity, and fulfillment.

Overlooking the Complex Cultural Meanings Given to Embodied Differences: The concern over sexualization fails to recognize that not all girls are affected by sexualized images in the same way. Current responses to sexting are heavily predicated upon protecting white, middle class, heterosexual girls from the damaging effects of early sexuality and sexual exploitation. Elided in this narrative is how girls who do not fit able-bodied norms are frequently subject to *compulsory asexuality*. Compulsory asexuality implies that disabled girls, for example, are not "viable" sexual subjects, and thus should be denied the right to express themselves sexually. This is perpetuated, in part, through the absence of visually disabled bodies in the available sexual imagery across many westernized cultures. Where sexy disabled bodies are on offer, they are still beautified in conventional ways and their disabilities mostly covered up. By contrast, the sexualities of queer and trans-identified girls are often fetishized in popular culture and in porn (Tsai 2010). Young Black, Indigenous and other racialized girls also tend to be constructed as dangerously hypersexual in the western cultural imaginary and in state-supported research and policy responses (Hill Collins 2000; Marshall 1996). When evoked in such contexts, this narrative typically masks and encodes anxieties about the threats posed by racialized girls' emergent fertility to national identity and prosperity.

By conveying that girls can only explore their sexualities and pleasure to the extent that they meet a normative white, straight, able-bodied ideal, the limited range of sexualized images in circulation works to alienate diversely-located girls from their sexual embodiment. For many marginalized girls, especially those who are cast as undesirable or asexual, sexualization may be salient in counteracting

insidious purity myths that are saturated with risk rhetorics. Yet, to date, expert responses to sexualization ignore the intersection of raced, sexed, disabled, and classed identities among girls.

Centering Girls' Sexual Embodiment

Fears over the sexualization of white girls may be less about sex and more about tarring the pristine with the same abject traits culturally associated with a difference: immorality, jeopardy, unfitness, lack, and failure. Egan (2013) suggests moral panics over youth sexuality are always linked to broader social anxieties, and often arise in moments of social and economic instability. She argues these larger fears—about the uncertain economic future of white middle class families, the precariousness of economic privilege, and the collapsing of boundaries between the upper and lower classes in troubled economic times—get projected on to girls' sexualities, which deflects attention away from mounting economic insecurities and inequalities and into that which is assumed to be within parents' control: protecting white middle class daughters from sexualization. Whether one agrees with Egan's argument, it is undeniable that sexualized images send the message to girls that their sexual expression is permissible only if they adhere to ablest and racist body standards. Contrarily, expert reports that issue lopsided analyses of sexualization—buttressed by school curricula, public health responses, and legal regimes—reinforce the idea that girls' becoming sexualities are potentially dangerous and should be regulated or suppressed. When concerns over sexualization focus only on how (unmarked) female bodies are sexualized and fail to acknowledge the multi-layered meanings that sexualization might hold for girls across a broad spectrum of embodied experiences, they miss important opportunities to cultivate girls' sexual knowledge creation and expression. The result of these conflicting sets of messages is that many girls learn to accept they have little right to fulfilling sexual experiences and little capacity to access or language their embodied sexual energies and emergent desires. From a feminist embodiment perspective, accessing and languaging these experiences and processes is vital to the elaboration of a new girl-centric discourse of sexual pleasure and desire.

Perhaps the sexualization literature itself fails to consider these issues because culturally we lack an adequate language with which to address girls' emergent sexualities due, in part, to public and moral pressures regarding their sexual safety. There is a fear that normalizing pre or pubescent girl sexuality will invite exploitation or risk-taking. However, failing to support girls in cultivating any sexuality ultimately poses greater dangers to their individual wellbeing and social power. This failure robs girls of the ability to explore, experience, and know their sexual bodies and sensations on their own terms and in their own ways and hence of the space to define their sexualities—whether straight, queer, bisexual, non-sexual or otherwise. More insidiously, rather than holding sexist culture accountable for imposing a certain version of adult sexuality onto pre/pubescent bodies, this failure

ultimately leaves girls to shoulder the blame for negative consequences of sexual experimentation (exploitation and victimization).

Importantly, the sexualization literature misses not only what our larger cultural lexicon misses but also what sex education materials miss. As many researchers have noted, sexuality education programs and curricula carry certain cultural assumptions and omissions about young bodies and sexualities. One such assumption is that boys will experience biological sexual desires and responses as a natural part of maturation while girls will develop reproductive capacities. Here is a recurring silence about girls' experience of sexual sensation or arousal as a marker of *their* maturation. In one popular Canadian Catholic School Board program called *Fully Alive*, for example, male pleasure is taught as biology—boys have wet dreams, erections, and ejaculations—while female pleasure is erased with the omission of one key part of female genitalia: the clitoris. The clitoris remains unmapped in many curriculum illustrations of female anatomy; even where it is named, its function tends not to be explained (Rice 2014). When reproductive maturity is seen as the goal (rather than one outcome) of puberty and sexual maturation, this discounts non-reproductive, non-heterosexual sexual expression, where anything outside of penis/vaginal intercourse is deemed not real sex. It also justifies the erasure of parts, like the clitoris, not directly connected to reproduction. In 2005, to give another example, an American grocery chain pulled *Seventeen Magazine* from 2500 stores for an article called Vagina 101, which featured an illustration of female genitalia that clearly labeled the clitoris. It is significant that (straight) boys' emerging sexualities are framed as normative and not written out of the cultural story of sexual development or subject to the same sorts of adult fears and censorship. In or outside the formal educational context, girls still face a little choice with regards to the expression of their sexuality: purity or promiscuity.

Bringing the Body into Sexuality Theory

Rather than approaching female sexuality from a strictly cultural or biological framework, we argue for an embodiment perspective that recognizes the inseparability of physicality from psyche and the multifaceted, entwined experience of bodily selves in context. This conceptualization is informed by body becoming theory, an offshoot of feminist philosophy of the body, and the new materialism, derived from feminist technology and science studies. Body-becoming theory represents a response to what sexuality scholars Jackson and Scott (2010) have named the linguistic turn in sexuality studies—that is, the reformulation of sexuality through a poststructuralist and queer theoretical lens. What distinguishes post-structuralist sexuality theories is their anti-essentialist emphasis on examining the cultural forces and meaning making systems that shape our understandings and experiences of gender and sexuality. While poststructuralist theorizing has attended to the historical, social and political conditions that create and regulate categories of gender and sexuality available to people, it has also been critiqued for its tendency

to overlook the body and bodily experiences. To address the seeming disappearance of matter in this frame, body-becoming theorists such as Grosz (1994) and Battersby (1998) have argued for bringing the material body back into theorizing, without its essentialist assumptions. Grosz, for example, sees bodies not as biologically or genetically determined entities but as emergent systems that come to be through relations with natural and cultural forces that constitute and surround them. Drawing from body becoming theories, we might theorize adolescent sexuality as an emergent force that materializes as a result of the body's agency—its hormonal and physiological vicissitudes and sexual drives and sensations—intermingling with cultural, social, environmental, and psychic forces acting in and upon it.

Similar to body becoming theory, the new materialism understands matter to have agency independent of people's perceptions or manipulations of it. Feminist biologist Fausto-Sterling (2012) views the becoming of bodies as a relatively open process that cannot be determined in advance and seeks to explain how the natural and cultural affect and transform each other to jointly construct our embodiments. Social epidemiologist Nancy Krieger likewise sees humans as "simultaneously social beings and biological organisms" (2005, p. 350) whose bodies materialize continuously through embodying the world—incorporating ever-changing social, physical and cultural circumstances into themselves. By stressing the body's open-ended becoming, new materialists enable us to see how biology might influence, but not determine, what bodies and sexualities can be. Because cultural contexts, physical/social environments, personal habits, and psychic forces interact to shape each person's sexual/physical being and embodied experiences, no one can predict with certainty what any body/sexual experience will be; rather, bodies and sexualities emerge *through* interacting.

Body-becoming and new materialist perspectives are important to theorizing sexuality because they recognize the entangled roles of sociality and physicality, of discourses and drives, of process and unpredictability, in understanding the materialization of sexual bodies and sexualities. Rather than lodging the truth about sexuality in discourse or science, they ask us to think about the manifold forces that shape sexuality's emergence. This view orients us to what is emanating from the pubescent body as it interweaves with psyche and context in the becoming of female sexualities. Finally, it enjoins us to reconsider how bodily processes and embodied experiences, when viewed through an anti-essentialist feminist lens, may be resources for re-conceiving what female sexualities could become.

Sexting: A Space for Storying Sexuality?

Currently, little is understood regarding adolescent girls' own understanding and experiences of sexuality. Even less is known about girls' sexting interactions. This may be a consequence of the limited spaces provided for them to express themselves sexually without censure or shame. In a culture that regulates female sexuality along such lines, sexualization might offer girls a pathway, albeit a constrained one, for

coming to know their sexualities. Here, sexualization—developing awareness of one's sexuality and making sexual one's self-presentation—is understood not as problematic so much as the sexist beauty and purity/hypersexuality myths that inform and constrain it. If young women had permission and power to shape the conditions of their objectification—when, how and with whom they self-objectified and sexualized—would sexualization necessarily be harmful? Objectification, as dictated by and for men, as a measure of female self worth, value and power, unquestionably alienates girls from their embodied sexualities because they are performing rather than experiencing sexuality. However, objectification as a means of expressing desirability/desire within an erotic encounter can enable girls to take pleasure in, and responsibility for, their sexual experiences. Sexualization may further offer space for marginalized girls, or girls who do not fit ideals of the body beautiful, to be acknowledged as having sexual sensations and desires and with these, the right to a gender and sexual identity. Scaffolding this self-knowledge may be the first step towards girls' expanding their sexual rights and citizenship.

Empirical researchers are starting to pay attention to the potential benefits of sexualization. Some argue that sexualization, especially within the parameters of a digital landscape, enables certain youth necessary space for sexual exploration (Bond 2010). Sexting, for example, may provide needed space for girls to develop subjective awareness of their sexual feelings and desires using a personal technology that possibly enables them to resist hegemonic attempts to deny their sexualities (Renold and Ringrose 2011, 2013). Research has shown the benefit of digital spaces as important starting places for youth sexual self-definition and expression (Pascoe 2011). This is especially evident for marginalized youth, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning and intersexed (LGBTQQI) youth, youth with disabilities, and those who are non-normatively sized. In her film *Want*, for example, Canadian artist and self-identified “femme gimp” Loree Erickson subverts the ablest gaze and asexualization of disabled people by demonstrating, through self made porn, that for her sexual expression is a necessary part of living a fulfilled life. Research on sexual minorities has demonstrated the value of the internet as a safe space for undertaking identity work that in offline spaces would be dangerous. LGBTQQI youth use these spaces to gain sexuality education, find relationships, and share coming out experiences and safer sex practices (Hiller and Harrison 2007). Some youth who identify as anxious or shy have also reported finding solace in online sexual communities. Digital media such as social networking can provide a life-saving emotional connection for teens who have experienced sexual trauma or bullying, or simply help inform them of gaps in their sexual health knowledge. Examples of digitally-mediated sexualization that show positive rewards for youth raise questions about the extent to which sexualization, including sexting, can similarly create space for girls' sexual empowerment.

Of the research that exists on the empowering aspects of sexting (interactions that are positive, adaptive, and supportive of personal agency), studies suggest that sexting is associated with sexual pleasure; that it enables youth to explore relationships, develop sexual identities, and determine sexual morals and values; and that it allows them to practice negotiating consent and sexual boundaries (Ferguson 2011).

For girls especially, sexting may offer a safer place to make sexual requests and express sexual desire, which challenges dominant sexual scripts of girls as sexually passive. Sexting may also be considered a safe(r) sexual practice for it limits the risk of STIs and unwanted pregnancies, which has implications for girls' empowerment in terms of social and economic advancement. Sexting may prolong the amount of time that youth engage in sexual self-exploration, which may positively benefit them in future sexual relationships. These findings offer evidence that sexting may be one option for girls to seek and develop sexual self-knowledge and empowerment. Technologically-mediated sexual exchanges may be especially important for girls who are learning to express their sexual feelings more openly. For those otherwise denied sexual expression, digital media, including sexting, can serve as a place to explore sexual desire and assert sexual subjectivity.

It must be simultaneously acknowledged that girls' expressions of sexual agency, including via sexting, hold striking resemblance to the commodified versions of female sexuality sold to youth through raunch culture (Levy 2005) and advertising (Gill 2008). Given the contentious and often contradictory nature of girls' subjective experiences of sexuality in a world that carefully constructs and scripts available discourses from which to build their sexual identities, defining what constitutes sexual empowerment remains a challenge. As a result, feminist scholars such as Sharon Lamb, Zoe Peterson, Nicola Gavey, and Rosalind Gill have debated the usefulness of the concept in advocating for girls' sexuality justice. On one side, Lamb (2010) argues that in a sexist climate, girls who participate in self-sexualization do not experience true but rather "pseudo" empowerment, whereby they subjectively feel liberated even as they objectively reinforce patriarchal prescriptions about gendered sexuality. This "facade of choice," as Gavey (2012, p. 722) puts it, masquerades as empowering and even pleasurable, while reproducing dominant gendered norms.

There is empirical validity to this position. One systemic review found that some girls report feeling pressure to sext and fear that boys will read their sexts as indicators they are sexually available when they aren't (Klettke et al. 2014). In another study, Erchull and Liss (2013) found that in a culture that affords women less political clout, voice, and financial remuneration, girls learn to exchange erotic capital for personal and social advancement. Those studied, who subscribed to the belief that sex is a form of power, did not equate this with *empowerment* but instead with objectification and mental health concerns. Erchull and Liss caution that girls who equate sex with power may limit themselves from seeking other, more health promoting and affirming, sources of power.

Peterson (2010) counter-argues that denying girls' subjective feelings of empowerment is just as damaging as it robs them of voice and discounts their self expressions as possible subversive acts. Assertions that pleasure, choice, and agency are not markers of empowerment risk invalidating girls' embodied experiences. Conceptualizing empowerment as a process that includes multiple and mixed realities, Peterson also contends that arguments recognizing girls' own meanings are themselves empowering as they enable youth to act in their own interests. Honouring girls' *feelings* of sexual liberation is an important step toward

advocating with and for girls, as it positions girls as sexual subjects, actively constructing their sexual and gendered realities, rather than as unknowing objects who are acted upon.

Acknowledging critical points offered by both sides of the debate, we suggest that arguments about empowerment that privilege individuals' interpretations of experiences or conversely, that ignore these in favour of unpacking cultural narratives fail to create space for girls to move beyond existing discourses and dynamics. Rather than being top-down or totalizing, culture is a circulating force that all its' members participate in creating. At the same time, girls' embodied sexualities are situated in and shaped, in part, by culture. We thus agree with Gill who advocates for striking a balance between top down and bottom up analyses by asking researchers, policymakers, and other experts to *critically respect* individuals' accounts (2007); to acknowledge girls' own expertise over their embodied experiences of sexuality, while also situating their affects and expressions within the wider context. Rather than rejecting the term empowerment outright, we suggest that the term can serve as a shorthand way to talk about girls' multifaceted sexual subjectivities and contradictory experiences.

Pathways Forward?

In spite of these conflicting positions, feminist scholars generally agree that we must begin debate from the standpoint of promoting sexual rights and justice. They note that because multiple intersecting identities and socio-economic contexts shape girls' experiences and the meanings they attach to them, arriving at a consensus on indicators of empowerment remains an ongoing challenge. All concur that marginalised girls are erased from debates and that white, non-disabled, middle class girls from the Anglophone West are privileged within them, which is not only detrimental to knowledge production but also to the advancement of girls' sexuality justice. Finally, they assert that every human has the right to sexual pleasure. Building on these areas of consensus, we have identified five possible pathways forward.

Creating the Conditions of Possibility for Sexuality Justice: Here we argue for critiquing sexualization while expanding space for girls' embodiment of pleasure and articulation of sexual knowledge. The reproduction of inequality through sexualized imagery is troubling and must be attended to. However, any critique that focuses solely on the harms of imposed sexuality, and fails to challenge societal fears about girls' enactment of sexuality, may be interpreted as equally problematic in so far as it negates what may be needed to create the conditions of possibility for sexuality justice. Discussions on sexual justice have been constrained by a lack of consideration over what constitutes *non-exploitative sexuality* in so-called vulnerable populations, including children. In particular, little attention has been paid to girls' pleasure (or to its erasure) (Fine and McClelland 2006) as an important facet of sexuality that begins in childhood. Infants touch their genitals with pleasure;

young children engage in exploratory masturbation; preteens experiment sexually with themselves and others; adolescents are curious about sexuality and their developing bodies; and older teenagers become active in partnered sexual relationships. Yet the idea that these experiences are normative and integral to child sexual exploration and youth sexual identity formation is elided. This is especially true for girls. Examining girls' embodiment of pleasure may be important, since those who receive the message that pleasure is important may feel emboldened to make decisions about when, with whom, and how *they* would like to be sexual. Centering girls' voices in the development of a multi-pronged platform for achieving sexuality justice is vital to creating the conditions of possibility for expanding their sexual becoming.

Challenging the twin imperatives of purity and hypersexuality: Any sexuality justice-oriented discussion must offer a critique of the twin imperatives surrounding sexuality that girls face: sexualization, which infuses them with sexuality, and sexual purity, which denies them any sexuality (Valenti 2009). Imposed sexuality—which carries prescriptions and expectations about being sexually desirable, skilled and ready—stands in stark contrast to the innocence narrative that enforces strict control of sexual desire and prohibits girls from engaging in sexual activity. These competing discourses interact in such a way that may leave girls feeling unprepared and self-conscious when they are ready for pleasurable sexual experiences. Weighting discussions on sexualization toward sexual protectionism, without welcoming girls' input on questions of sexual ownership, fulfillment and justice, limits girls' ability to feel supported in defining and advancing their sexual knowledge and the conditions that will enable sexuality justice. Given the rapidly changing cultural landscape, emergent sexual imagery showing girls as freely engaging in sexual exchange, as agentic and as desiring (even if carefully constructed), may create new sexual spaces for girls to occupy in contrast to the narrow space afforded them by older pedagogies of risk and purity. For some, especially marginalized girls whose sexualities are culturally denied or imputed, sexualization may provide a route to sexual self-exploration and assertion. In a sexualized era that increasingly constructs (some) girls as hypersexual, new opportunities may emerge for them to embody sexuality without shame or policing. The use of digital spaces may be one avenue whereby girls can access and express pleasure. This is not to say that sexualization, sexting, and associated practices are keys to empowerment but rather that we need to be careful in our critiques if few other options exist for girls to express themselves sexually.

Engaging girls in meaningful dialogue: We will not develop a fuller understanding of when/whether girls' experience their sexualities outside the marketplace, how they view sexual empowerment, and what the possibilities and limits of sexualization are for them, unless we engage them in a meaningful dialogue. Only then can we co-create progressive policies and practices that honour girls as sexual agents, enabling them to determine what aspects of their selves are sexual, with whom, and when. Engaging youth in conversation would enable them to speak above the risk rhetoric, which might lead to more effective strategies for their sexual wellbeing. Evidence shows that many risk reduction campaigns have been

ineffective and that youth have not been consulted in creating them. It is likely that involving youth in developing social justice-oriented health interventions would make them more relevant, salient, and impactful. With regard to sexting, one starting point might be to ask girls about the conditions that would facilitate positive sexual learning and to elucidate the meanings and motivations they ascribe to sexting in order to understand when it is exploitative and when it is generative for sexuality development.

Promoting progressive, inclusive sexuality education: Girls' sexualities are not a result of sexualized imagery, nor are they a side effect of developing bodies as we know that children explore their sexual energies, desires and bodies prior to puberty. However, we must recognize their experiences are mediated through, and informed by, these conditions, and thus act as supportive guides as girls navigate them. Safeguarding girls' well-being means investing our energies in advocating for sexuality justice instead of fixing our frightened or fascinated stare on their maturing bodies or trying to suppress their sexual exploration out of fear of victimization. Starting with inclusive sex education that doesn't reproduce the single stereotypical story about sexuality is integral to activating this shift and will go a long way in illuminating the possibilities for girls' enhanced sexual understanding and agency. Some examples of progressive sexuality education materials include those created by the Coalition for Positive Sexuality in the United States and the *Little Black Book for Girlz*, a Canadian resource created by and for tween girls. Both Peterson and Lamb (2012) argue for a need for more informed sexual education as a condition of cultivating sexual empowerment.

Working collectively and collaboratively: Bey-Cheng (2012) impresses upon us that empowerment is not forged in solitude. Current conceptualizations of empowerment have ignored the broader geo-political, environmental and institutional contexts within which raced, classed, disabled, and gendered individuals navigate their sexualities. As a result, the onus has rested on the individual girl to fix, unaided, the conditions undermining her sexual expression. Given girls' sexual feelings and practices are co-shaped by, and in response to culture, it seems necessary to approach the dismantling of these conditions by privileging, while simultaneously contextualizing, girls' lived experience of sexualization and sexting. Thus, it is up to advocates of all ages to come together to co-create new meanings and co-construct new discourses that help girls expand sexual spaces and open possibilities for sexual exploration while challenging the damaging paradigms that limit their sexual freedom.

Conclusion

A digitally-mediated sexual world is difficult for girls to navigate, but it also provides opportunities for sexual exploration and identification that otherwise might be disallowed. Supporting girls' sexual development means eliminating fear-based responses, whether to sexting, posing provocatively, or seeking sexual attention.

In a context where young women are encouraged to appear desirable without knowing their desires, critiquing sexualization without working simultaneously to advance sexuality justice, ultimately will lead to the continued censoring of girls sexual feelings and stigmatization of their sexual expression. Educating youth about risks, about who has ownership of sexual photos, and what consent looks like in sexting interactions, is essential and could be complemented by messages acknowledging and promoting girls' rights to desire and pleasure. As feminists concerned about sexuality justice, it seems imperative to analyze girls' sexualities in digital culture in ways that expand possibilities for their sexual subjectivity and citizenship. Creating space for new understandings of sexting and sexualization is one small starting point.

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Recovering Bodies: The Production of the Recoverable Subject in Eating Disorder Treatment Regimes

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Abstract In this chapter, we critique biopedagogies that inform eating disorder treatment. We employ a body-becoming counter-pedagogy as a theoretical frame in order to explore how youth develop and enact particular subjectivities when treated for eating disorders. Correspondingly, we consider how the failure or the refusal to enact an idealized subjectivity, one shaped by race and class and of particular interest to this chapter, sex and sexual orientation, results in the marking of bodies as unrecovered, even unrecoverable. We provide an account of biopedagogies of eating disorder recovery, against which we develop a body-becoming pedagogy. Using this philosophical framework we demonstrate how eating disorder treatment regimes sex bodies, and by extension how sex is conceptualized within hetero-sexual matrices.

In this chapter, we critique biopedagogies related to eating disorder treatment, problematizing what it means for youth to recover from eating disorders. The cultural narrative of recovery not only requires a certain body shape and size, but also codes healthy embodiments (bodies and minds) in gendered, heteronormative ways. Certain treatment outcomes, including weight restoration, “normalized eating,” return or commencement of menses, and rejoining a “normal developmental trajectory,” may fix embodiments signaling difference as unrecoverable. The stakes to claiming the status of recovered entail social acceptance and inclusion, leaving behind the stigma of a mental health diagnosis, and surviving what can be experienced as violent treatment regimens. As a result, youth may continue to find themselves thoroughly managed and self-managed as they work to enact the ideal recovered subject post-treatment and into recovery.

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By employing a “body-becoming pedagogy” (Rice 2014, p. 288), we investigate and challenge normative standards that motivate intensive body management strategies leading up to, throughout, and long after pathology. In so doing we call into question—to uncover, unlearn, and undo—problematic assumptions underpinning current clinical standards as well as the context within which those standards are embedded. Our aim for this work is to open up new avenues for youth (predominantly, though not exclusively, female subjects) to heal, to imagine self, and to re-conceptualize healthy embodiment in ways that incorporate the possibility of diversity in size and shape, race and class, and especially sex and orientation. We begin this chapter with an examination of the biopedagogy of a normative developmental trajectory in eating disorder recovery. Developing body-becoming theory as a counter-discourse to biopedagogy, we then theorize young women’s embodied negotiation of constructs of sex and sexuality in association with disordered eating, and we account for how bodies either enact recovery in accordance to certain social scripts and embodied practices, or else are marked as unrecoverable.

Pushing Against Biopedagogy

Our intention is to critique biopedagogies of eating disorder recovery in order to open up space for new possibilities of enacting recoverable subjectivities. We use the term biopedagogy to refer to the collection of normative standards and guidelines for daily living that materialize through performance and reiteration. Discursive constructions come to have force through their repeated citation in instructions and expectations to which people are expected to adhere, and are enacted in and through the body. Teachings about how to live take on substance when people live them. These teachings need not be transmitted through formal educational contexts, for they can derive more broadly from how people relate to social institutions and to others in their lives (LaMarre and Rice, in press).

The concept of biopedagogy is reminiscent of Foucault’s biopolitics. For Foucault (1978), biopolitics consist in systems of governance, especially neoliberal political economies that work upon and through bodies to produce an ideal, docile citizenry. Within biopolitical arrangements, institutional apparatuses exercise power over a population to regulate that population’s everyday living. While regional sovereigns exercise legal means to regulate people in the name of state security, a looser assemblage of instruction, direction, and standards, in the interest of health and/or happiness characterize biopedagogical apparatuses (Harwood 2009).

We invoke this Foucauldian foundation (joining a long history of eating disorder scholars who have done the same, such as Bordo 1998; Malson 1997) but would not go so far as to claim that the body is entirely the stuff of discursive practice—not merely a docile product of language. Weedon’s interpretation of Foucault offers greater nuance: “although the subject of poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices, she nonetheless exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent capable of resistance and innovations” (1987, p. 125). Reflecting on

Weedon's work, Eckermann claims Foucauldian eating disorder theory can account for "a complex practice of embodied communication and active identity construction" (2009, p. 13) that avoids reductionism and invites complexity. In what follows we extend this kind of analysis to eating disorder recovery, particularly young women's embodied negotiation with recovery rubrics (or protocols) that posit the body as inherently docile.

When we look at the history of eating disorder scholarship from both traditional biomedical and more populist feminist perspectives, intensive theorizing about the body itself has been notably missing (cf. Burns 2009; Lester 1997, 2004; Probyn 2009; Rice 2014). Writing against the grain, earlier critical work aiming to explain eating disorders did call into question any firm or final demarcation between eating routines categorized as healthy and those coded as disordered. A few critical scholars also productively theorized embodied disordered eating experiences using post-structural and phenomenological frames (Probyn 1988; Székely 1988). At the same time, most depictions, whether written in a scholarly or popular vein, called out the "eating disordered subject" as a carnivalesque (Warin 2010) object for surveillance and scrutiny. A preoccupation with the need to fix eating distress often led to engagement with the body only as an afterthought or as an inconvenient third variable.

The peripheral engagement of embodiment in this theory-work is ironic in light of the deep ties between the corporeal and the psychological inherent in the expression of eating disorders, which manifest as an interwoven landscape of symptoms classically tied to "the body" and "the mind." Even poststructural critical feminist theories that complicate the divide between normal and pathological body management behaviours have tended to remain tethered to a commitment to theorize in the discursive realm, "retreat[ing] from the material" (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, p. 3). Burns (2009) describes this split as one between groups of feminists committed to analyzing the inscription of culture on the body and those interested in exploring experiences in and emanating from bodies. While framing eating disorders with feminist and clinical lenses alike requires at least a peripheral attendance to *observing* bodies, the *embodied experience* of eating disorders has not been the subject of significant theory-work, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Székely 1988).

A search for the cause(s) of eating disorders has taken a turn toward investigating biological (genetic or genomic) causes. With scholarship increasingly moving toward an analysis of genetic roots of eating disorders (e.g. Bulik 2013; Bulik et al. 2006), it is important to acknowledge that genetics do not exist in a petri dish in the scientist's imagination (Fausto-Sterling 2000). Positivist biological research on eating disorders may be experienced as helpful and stigma-reducing (Easter 2012; LaMarre and Rice 2015), but also risk reducing bodily experiences (particularly those labeled deviant) to a set of solvable and indifferent equations. Equally and on the other hand, fixating on the discursive realm may "collapse very real voices and bodies into mere matter to be appropriated by discourse" (Probyn 1988, p. 201). Treading a middle ground, Burns (2009) and Rice (2009) implore us

to experiment with new ways of researching bodies (particularly those deemed eating disordered) that engage with bodily experiences.

It is through this lens that we might understand how early explanations of disordered eating map neatly onto conceptualizations of the body in relation to gender and sex. Examples include an historical focus on the female sexed body as deficient, a site of “unwellness and infirmity” (Burns 2004); a fascination with the “feminine grotesque hysterical body” (Lupton 1996); and a persistent fear of the female body’s leaks and flows that challenge inscribed notions of body boundaries (Shildrick 1997). As Burns (2004) notes, the gospel of Cartesian dualism has led to a binary portrait of two primary eating disorder diagnoses, anorexia nervosa (AN) and bulimia nervosa (BN). Behaviours associated with AN, especially restriction, are explained by a desire on the part of “the anorexic” to exert mind in control of body in a way that approaches (but never reaches) the masculine; contrarily, BN comes to represent expected uncontrollable femininity as the body rules the mind and defies reason (Burns 2004). Burns goes on to argue that the social fear generated by what these bodies and behaviours signify in turn infuses and drives clinical responses: in the case of AN, experts intervene to regulate body weight and intake because the body itself signals a place near death whereas in BN, they seek to regulate bodily expulsion due to a collective fear of the leakiness of purging behaviour and the body’s associated uncontrollability. Citing Bordo (1993) and Malson’s (1998) earlier work on the dichotomous construction of AN and BN, Burns notes that “these dualistic discourses (re)produce patriarchal dichotomies in which femininity is associated with corporeality, excess, weakness and irrationality” (2004, p. 288).

Perhaps most problematically, the way that researchers have typically conceptualized eating disorders fixes these constructs as static states of being. Accordingly, eating disordered and recovered subjects are also situated as dichotomous, with no possibility of existing in the otherwise or the in-between. These categories may lead to the articulation of an ideal of full recovery that precludes membership to those who do not follow a set of eating standards and bodily norms that inscribe them on the recovered side. The iconic rules of treatment programs, including weight restoration (monitored by regular weigh-ins) via a regime of normalized eating (according to a fixed and standardized meal plan) and minimal to no exercise have been critiqued for inadvertently re-inscribing a rigidity that reflects while it inverts the rigidity deemed to be the purview of eating disorders (particularly anorexia) (Boughtwood and Halse 2008, 2010; Gremillion 2003). The pervasiveness of discourse in and through bodies is reproduced in recovery, as body-work is reconfigured such that individuals perform a more suitable relationship with food and weight, a “laboring and working on the self” (Hardin 2003, p. 11).

Further, recovery discourses require patients’ deference to the authority of experts (such as psychiatrists and doctors) whose knowledge about their subject positions and the origins of their behaviours is privileged. Disagreement from the patient may be coded as rebellion and/or denial (LaMarre and Sutherland 2014; Jones and Malson 2011; Ryan et al. 2006). This dynamic is taken up in the name of normal developmental trajectories in adolescent treatment contexts. In her

ethnography of an eating disorder treatment unit, Gremillion (2003) reflects on how the treatment team acts as a surrogate family for the adolescent in treatment in a manner designed to foster a patient's rejoinder to "normal development," assumed to be displaced by the eating disorder. Whereas rebellion in the adult treatment setting is called out for immediate regulation (LaMarre and Sutherland 2014), a certain type of rebellion is expected within the context of adolescent treatment. This (bounded, prescribed) rebellion is perceived as an assertion of independence concordant with separating the self from the family, reproducing an individualistic approach to being in the world (Gremillion 2003). The promotion of the "independent self" in contemporary Western treatment settings is a paradoxical project, using a "foster family" (i.e. the treatment team) to yield a compliant but independent recovered subject (Lester 2004). And certainly, not all types of rebellion are coded as normal, healthy, or productive: Gremillion's (2003) account also reveals the extent to which racialized and working class youth are inordinately referred to as "treatment resistant" or given the label of borderline (as in, borderline personality disorder) should their behaviours stray from the expected recovery trajectory.

The clinical practice of diagnosing racially and economically marginalized patients as suffering from something other than "typical" or "true" eating disorders (Gremillion 2003, p. 157) not only works to reconstitute the ideal eating disorder patient as white and middle class, but it also functions to exclude the presenting symptoms of others from diagnostic description/criteria and hence, from treatment programs and from recovery itself. Recent research suggests that Gremillion's findings on the exclusion of racially and economically marginalized patients from diagnostic criteria and treatment programs may not be anomalous. In a narrative study of body image and eating concerns among diverse Canadian women, Rice (2014) found that all racialized participants (Asian, South Asian, and African Caribbean) who recounted experiences of serious eating distress in adolescence also reported being misdiagnosed or dismissed by various health care providers—an experience they each attributed to providers' stereotypic perceptions of their race. Significantly, in being labeled as atypical or misdiagnosed as suffering from some puzzling physical or worse, psychosomatic complaint, racialized participants were often marked as unintelligible, excessively pathological, and potentially untreatable. This further reveals how normative developmental trajectories and associated disorders and treatments themselves become decipherable and knowable against what has been left out of the conventional biomedical scripts (Rice 2014).

Introducing the Body to Theory

In the theorizing that follows, we hope to build a framework for critiquing the relationship between the biopedagogy of normalized recovery and the enactment of sexual difference and orientation. Body-becoming theory itself functions as a response to what Barad (2003) calls the cultural or linguistic turn, in reference to social constructivist feminisms and post-structural traditions. The former theoretical

strains—anti-essentialist or social constructivist feminist approaches—emphasize the historical, political, and cultural conditions responsible for meaning-making, especially the production of gender and sex. In this endeavor, they are distanced from the biological and the material (e.g., Bordo 1993). Ahmed, characterizing critiques of this brand of feminism, writes, “feminism it seems has forgotten how matter matters” (2008, p. 32). That is, body becoming theorists critique the linguistic turn based on its seeming dissolution of matter into discourse in its claim that material realities are impossible to know, make sense of, or access without discourse making them intelligible. Discourse does more than mediate our access to material reality, however: material reality is also shaped by language. Body-becoming theory can thus be seen as a response to post-structuralisms that emphasize an exploration of how phenomena are understood and produced within a certain system of meaning-making. Granted, post-structural theory-work is attenuated to language’s constitutive exclusions, that is, it is responsive to what is left out of constructions of what is normal/all-there-is (Blanchot 1995; Derrida 1974). Nonetheless, discourse remains a sort of inevitability, where what is outside of normal floats in the ether until it is brought into the meaning-making system by language (Derrida 1994). Matter, then, is positioned only as passive and only made of discourse. It has no role to play in its own shaping.

The body acts as a point of contention and site of struggle when it resists social and discursive structure. Proponents of body-becoming theory (e.g., Battersby 1998; Grosz 1994, 1999) account for this resistance and return to theorizing the body, but do so without committing to essentialist assumptions. That is, this theory-work accounts for the body without losing track of its discursive entanglements. In Grosz’s words: “the body is no longer brute nor passive but is interwoven with the constitutive systems of meaning” (1994, p. 18). What, then, is the relationship between the material and the discursive? Butler ventures an answer, positing that materiality is “a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface” (2014, p. 27). Matter is that which materializes, that which comes to be significant, through acts of naming. These acts must be reiterative, such that through repetition they carry and collect enough authoritative force to be corporeally inscribed—pressed upon and transmitted through the body. Butler calls this process performativity, a citational practice “by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (p. 16). Performative activities bring into being that which they structure, or materialize the meaning that they fix and frame. While there are scholars who dismiss Butler as not ascribing enough “weight” to matter (Alaimo and Hekman 2008; Grosz 2005), performativity is meant to operate at the interface between the natural and the cultural, and in so doing dissolve the divide that has long been erected between them (Barad 2003).

The performative process of subject-formation is a process that requires exclusion of what Butler calls the constitutive outside: “the unspeakable, the unviable, the non-narrativizable that secures, and hence, fails to secure the very borders of meaning” (2014, p. 290). That which stands on the margins of intelligibility is the condition for the possibility of intelligibility, for performative meaning-making

happens juxtaposed against it. Constitutive exclusions act as the substance of a thing that exceeds thematic boundary-markers.

Corporeal experiences that defy thematization are rendered abject, a term that refers to being cast off. Kristeva develops the concept, noting its simultaneous conjuring of revulsion and desire, or a “vortex of summons and repulsion” (1982, p. 1). Developing an ontology of abjection (as far as we are capable) explains how the body is never entirely contained within its signifiers. Though it is difficult to frame the unspeakable here with language, the body always already exceeds its classifications and never entirely fits within the confines of regulatory practice. The body is more fluid than fixed, for it (or more precisely, its not-it) leaks through boundaries (Shildrick 1997). The body is permeable, in flux, and never finished, notwithstanding efforts to entrap it entirely within language. The recalcitrance of the abject suggests that matter is not only a discursive product, that the body is not only passive, inert, waiting to be called, but is instead dynamic, difficult, even excitable.

In her work on agential realism, Barad calls this agency, reclaiming and re-conceptualizing the term by supposing that agency need not belong to an already formed subject that precedes discursive categories. She writes: “agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world. The universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming” (2007, p. 141). Understood in this way, there is no essential feature to embodiment, nothing that it has to be, except for its quality of ever becoming. In Barad’s interpretation of performativity, matter can stabilize and destabilize through something she calls iterative intra-activity: “it is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and the properties of the ‘components’ of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful” (1998, p. 815). As opposed to *interaction*, the term *intra-action* does not suppose that objects exist prior to their confrontation. So embodied subjects form or, better, materialize through an agency that engages with, is immersed within, and emerges from the forces acting upon it:

‘[I]ntra-action’ signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast with the usual ‘interaction,’ which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action (2007, p. 33).

That agency may be fixed through performative practice, but never permanently, for it can be dislodged and can destabilize its own materializations; it can reach into the abject, push against its boundaries, and become something other.

Becoming Women

Sexual difference emerges through performativity such that—to play with de Beauvoir’s (2014) assertion when making sense of the second sex—one becomes woman. To become woman is to enact a femininity that affects and operates through the body. According to Butler, sexual difference “is never simply a function

of material differences which are not in some way both marked and formed by discursive practices” (2014, p. 15). Enmeshed in and indissociable from the discursive, the material becomes a particular body—a sexed body—that does not simply receive but also transmits signifiers of sexual difference. So, sex does not precede gender; gendered activities have corporeal reach such that they sex bodies.

For Butler, sex is a doing, not an attribute essential to a body but the repeated enactment of a body in ways that flag membership to a sex-based category. Grosz argues that citational practices produce socially acceptable sexual differences by containing the volatility and abjectness of sexual difference within the body; she thus supposes that the material confronts the discursive with difference that is “incapable of ready containment, [seeping] across boundaries into areas that are apparently not its own” (1994, p. 2). When considering how diet and exercise not only press upon the surface of the body but also work their way through the body’s interior, Grosz claims that these activities, and the expectation that they be carried out, “help constitute the very biological organization of the subject—the subject’s height, weight, coloring, even eye color, are constituted as such by a constitutive interweaving of genetic and environmental factors” (p. 42). While feminist work has well documented the hallmarks of eating disorders as activities that produce or spurn—and either way stand in relationship to—constructs of femininity (Rice 2014), more relevant to this chapter is the re-production of these activities in treatment and recovery strategies to mark the body as healthy, where health is associated with idealized or normalized femininity.

Gremillion (2003) deconstructs the role of gender and power in shaping eating disordered subjects and their treatment experiences. Among her conclusions, including the aforementioned imperatives issued to majority (white middle class) youth to rejoin a normal developmental pathway and the more contradictory responses sent to minoritized youth who both buttress and threaten to breach its boundaries, she speaks to the pervasiveness of normative ideas about gender within the unit. As the treatment environment replicates a foster family, so too does the unit act as a microcosm of broader gendered power relations. In her work, Gremillion engages extensively with how treatment contexts may mimic broader social relationships by teaching patients to more effectively toe the line between restraint and excess (i.e., in a socially normative way). They exhort rejoining a heteronormative matrix wherein fit female subjectivity is enacted through compliance with dominant biopedagogical instructions for normal gendered development. Simultaneously, they render certain racialized and classed constructions of gendered subjectivity as always already unfit to struggle for fitness or for normative femininity.

In the context of treatment settings, recovering subjects are expected to enact femininity—and more precisely, to fuse, in that enactment, an older white, middle class, restrained femininity with a newer, neoliberalized, heterosexually permissive, fit femininity—in order to express wellness. This enactment, and hence recovery itself, may become more or less attainable depending on the complex intersections of patients’ embodied positionalities. Here the capacity to demonstrate deference to raced, classed, and gendered norms for embodied subjectivities and to follow expert

food and weight restoration prescriptions are seen to result in the restoration of body weight, menses, and “normal social functioning,” all markers that precipitate the declaration of recovery.

Dominant framings of eating disordered sexuality have played up a binary positioning between anorexic and bulimic sexual subjectivity by suggesting that women diagnosed with anorexia are likely to be sexually repressed while women diagnosed with bulimia or binge eating disorder are more readily understood as sexually insatiable (Burns 2004). So it is perhaps unsurprising that control over sexuality is also exercised in grooming recovery. For example, treatment contexts offer guidelines for dress, suggesting that clothing must be neither too tight (which would affirm the kind of aggressive feminization and pursuit of attention that has been reductionistically associated with bulimia in particular) nor too loose (which would signal denial of femininity). These prescriptions circulate more or less explicitly in treatment contexts and beyond, signaling another expectation for what recovered bodies can (and should) be in a “totally pedagogized society” (Bernstein 2001, pp. 365–366). That which exceeds these narrow prescriptions is rendered abject.

Warin (2010) suggests that eating disorders may be a way of distancing the self from the abject. Specifically addressing the behaviours typically associated with anorexia, she argues that embodied practices of restriction, bingeing and purging, alongside a suite of behaviours less commonly described in the popular eating disorder literature (including chewing and spitting, engaging in intricate cleansing rituals, etc.), can serve (at least in the short term) as empowering and cleansing practices. She asserts that through “abject relations with food,” individuals may cast off the uncleanness associated with bodily processes and practices. Warin’s conceptualization of anorexia explicitly brings the outside in, calling into question formulations of eating disorders that only lightly (or not at all) attend to the affect behind embodied experience and practice and the functions that practices may serve for people. Theorizing around abjection also lets us reposition the agency of individuals practicing behaviours coded as eating disordered: recognizing the permeability of bodies and that which exceeds beyond the “container body” (Battersby 1998), eating disorders become a way to calm anxiety around the excess, the abject, the uncontrollable. Importantly, this calming should not be interpreted as a nod to the classic explanation of eating disorders as a way to wrest control over the body. Bringing bodily process in allows us to avoid this reductionist reading by instead suggesting that different behaviours around food come to signify active bodily processes in the service of negotiating and renegotiating body boundaries.

Orienting Women

This subtle articulation of normal social functioning expected of subjects who have been properly gendered and sexed through recovery processes reveals how sex and sexual orientation interrelate. Signifiers of sexual difference function within

heterosexual matrices, or in Butler's words, sex's materiality is "sustained through...regulatory norms that are in part those of heterosexual hegemony" (2014, p. 35). Non-heteronormative orientations are culturally associated with broken or damaged gender presentations, such as the association of lesbians with masculinity or the misconception that queer women do not deal with eating distress (Jones and Malson 2011). Performative practices that enact gender categories (including those prescribed in eating disorder treatment contexts) do so in the service of maintaining heteronormative standards, and thus produce within and impress upon the body not simply sex but also sexuality.

Treatment strategies that include particular ways of inhabiting and orienting sexuality may be coding recovery—and recovered bodies—using a heteronormative (as well as a white, middle class) rubric. There does not seem to be an imagination for queer women taking up intensive body management practices, as research characterizes women's sexual orientation as a protective factor in relation to eating disorder diagnoses (Herzog et al. 1992; Schneider et al. 1995; Share and Mintz 2002). This premise operates on several grounds, among them that lesbian, bisexual, and queer women experience higher rates of body satisfaction and that they are less likely to internalize the heteronormative male gaze, that feminist extension of Foucauldian biopower (Jones and Malson 2011; MacDonald 2011). According to such a line of reasoning, women with non-heteronormative orientations are more likely to deviate from the rituals of performativity that mark women as women.

The presumption of immunity hinges upon the erasure of "femme" as a distinct lesbian or queer feminine identity category. Justifications for ruling lesbian, bisexual, and queer women out from eating disorder discourses include assumptions that they are ubiquitously fat and butch (cf. McPhail and Bombak, forthcoming), and by extension, that only persons with thin and effeminate bodies experience eating disorders. Even when scholars do acknowledge the range of gender presentations running through queer communities, they risk re-producing a gender binary reminiscent of what Burns cautions against in her account of the dichotomization of AN and BN diagnoses. For example, Meyer et al. (2001) found, in a positivistic psychological study on the role that gender-related traits play in interaction with sexual orientation when predicting disordered eating, that participants manifesting masculine traits were more likely to binge and purge, while those with feminine traits were more likely to engage in restrictive behaviours. They also found that for the men in their sample, eating disorder diagnosis appeared to be linked to sexual orientation (such that gay men were more likely than men with heteronormative orientations to be diagnosed), while for women the diagnosis of an eating disorder was more commonly linked to gender traits (such that the more feminine a woman presented, regardless of orientation, the more likely she was to develop an eating disorder). Theirs is not the only study to associate what they identify as "negative femininity" with disordered eating (Ludwig and Brownell 1999; Paxton and Sculthorpe 1991). Lakkis et al. (1999) call this phenomenon the feminine hypothesis, according to which lesbian, bisexual, and queer women who exhibit traits coded as both feminine and negative including "passivity, dependence,

unassertiveness, and low self-esteem” (p. 12) are positioned as being at greater risk of developing eating disorders.

Moulding (2009) explicates the feminine hypothesis against a socio-historical backdrop wherein women’s distress is pathologized and managed in treatment. Moulding recalls earlier scholarship on the constructed dualism of the anorexic virgin in need of protection and the bulimic whore in need of containment: “ultimately, a normative, healthy female sexuality is not to be found in either [stereotype] because the eating disordered woman isn’t a ‘real’ (that is, ‘normal’) woman at all” (p. 180). She goes on: “each of these incarnations is positioned as lying outside heteronormative femininity, which involves the ‘right’ amount of sexual desire” (p. 180). A real woman, one possessing positive feminine traits, fits a heteronormative mould by expressing and attracting a particular amount and kind of desire. If young women can only claim the status of recovered when they enact a femininity that upholds heterosexual hegemony it would follow that queer women may not be immune to eating disorder diagnoses; instead, heterosexuality may be discursively produced in relation to recovery, failing to name and in effect working to erase any queerness that could have been incorporated into the process of subject-formation. Young women can certainly push back against dominant discourses that characterize how their recovered bodies should be oriented. Their embodied, intra-active negotiations with eating disorder treatment may yield new ways of experiencing and enacting recovery, creating new subject positions in the recovery process. Still, it is not an easy thing to materialize a counter-hegemonic sexuality within contexts that have not accounted for it (Rinaldi and Walsh 2014).

Complicating and compounding the problem, psychiatrists have historically framed and treated variant orientations as psychosocial deviance (Burstow 1990). Psychiatric discourses have thus been complicit in upholding paradigmatic sexualities, and have been drawn upon in order to make sense of and keep at bay othered orientations and gender presentations (Drescher 2010). This is evident in the naming of homosexuality as a mental disorder in the earliest version of the DSM (Kirk and Kutchins 1992). As already pointed out, repeated acts of naming accumulate inscriptional force. In North America, this legacy can still be found in intensifying political debates over controversial reparative and conversion therapies that still presume homosexuality is a mental disorder, and in any other insistence that queerness can be cured or prayed away (Forstein 2002; Shelton and Delgado-Romero 2013). It seems par for the course, then, that people with mental health diagnoses manifest recovery by enacting normative roles and relations (Rinaldi and Walsh 2014).

Conclusion

Lester (1997), arguing against Bruch’s (1978) classical accounts of the production of eating disorders in family contexts, suggests that women with eating disorders are far from passive and disembodied; they are active in technologies of the (bodily)

self (Foucault 1986) and work deliberately to assemble the conditions of their existence in a specific social context. Here, divisions between the “inside” and the “outside” of the body become less rigid; for example, by acting in specific ways with food, individuals diagnosed with eating disorders might reconstitute personal and cultural meanings associated with eating and body management (Lester 1997). Behaviours coded as deviant or pathological in curative discourse may be empowering (at least in the short term) for the individuals practicing them (Warin 2010). However, the body is never independent of sociocultural context. Thus, this reconstituted relationship needs necessarily be understood against Grosz’s “constitutive interweaving of genetic and environmental factors” (1994, p. 42).

A failure to engage with this interweaving may help to explain the sense of disconnect that some critical feminist scholars have expressed with respect to the dominant framings of eating disorders from either (or both) biomedical and critical feminist standpoints (e.g. Rice 2014; Saukko 2008). Bodies are not simply “matter to be appropriated by discourse” (Probyn 1988, p. 201), nor are they a source of truth (Lester 1997). Efforts, then, to categorize eating disorders may fall short of meaningfully describing lived embodied experiences. These categories define limits of normal and abnormal at the edges of clinical symptomatology in a way that can neglect the spaces in between represented in the lived experience of disordered eating. Their tendency to split and dichotomize eating disorders may do an injustice to these conflicted and contested lived experiences, which vary cross-culturally and according to other spaces of belonging (Becker et al. 2009; Wonderlich et al. 2007). Further, DSM diagnoses do little to attend to alternative possibilities for recovery, perhaps best illustrated by a tenaciously low recovery rate among individuals with eating disorders in iteration after iteration of this psychiatric tome.

If we are to attend to bodies in recovery as agentic and as actively working within discursive and material constraints to produce subjectivity, we might uncover and articulate an array of experiences of bodily subjectivity. Eating disorder theories deliberately engaging bodies open up space for diverse embodiments of recovery and different ways of being in the body. They challenge us to conceptualize bodies and embodied subjectivity as being in constant transition, and in continuous relation, and grounded in corporeal experience. They trouble the split between normal and eating disordered, between eating disordered and in recovery, and between in recovery and recovered. Equally, engaging with body-becoming frameworks opens up space for volatile (Grosz 1994), unpredictable (Rice 2014), and leaky (Shildrick 1997) bodies that are experienced not as eating disordered or recovered but as bodies in continual motion, producing and reproducing subjectivity.

We are left, then, with this problem: what might be recovered from bodies in constant states of becoming? Or, what might be salvaged, restored, and carried through to the next iteration of embodied subjectivity if not the trappings of sexual difference and sexual orientation? Perhaps the framing of the term recovery itself fails us, even when it is more progressively conceived as recovery from oppressive social conditions, recovery from rigid and constricting heterosexual matrices (e.g.

Howell and Voronka 2012; Morrow 2013). If the point is not restoration, but instead to undo the work of common treatment patterns, what remains in the undoing?

Or perhaps our staunchest post-structural forebears would be far more at a loss for how to mark the recoverable subject insofar as they proposed that subjectivity is entirely contained within the discursive realm. We offer here the possibility that agency is negotiated within body- and self-management strategies. We call into question the power dynamics that are inscribed upon the body in order to open up new possibilities for becoming. What remains, what is restored, and what we recover here, are new possibilities for enacting what has heretofore been rendered abject.

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G Major to D Major to a Minor 7 (A Progression to Recovery)

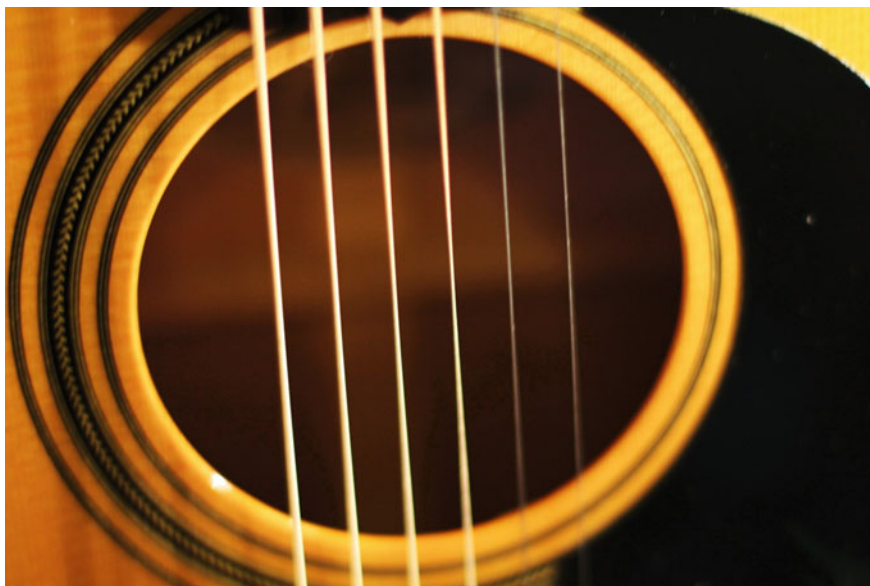
Cameron Duff

Abstract This chapter relies on the heuristic example of learning to play the guitar to prise open the affective and embodied aspects of recovery from mental illness. Combining qualitative data derived from studies of young people's recovery from mental illness conducted in Melbourne, Australia, with an autoethnographic account of my own guitar practise, I attempt to convey something of the actual experience of recovery. Drawing from recent work on affective pedagogies, I describe the ways young people living with mental illness learn how to recover, how to manage their illness, to adapt to difficult circumstances, and to live meaningful, satisfying lives. Focusing on the *affected body of recovery*, I explore what recovery feels like, what changes it involves for young people living with mental illness, and how youth come to recognise themselves as being in recovery. I close by assessing how an attunement to affect and the body may inspire novel means of facilitating the work of recovery.

Keywords Recovery • Mental illness • Affect • Embodiment • Deleuze

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Etude



Michael

It was the second time I was in Werribee hospital. I saw a lady come into the lounge room and she started playing her acoustic guitar. What I remember is the look on the faces of the patients. They looked happy. I said to myself that I would like to play my guitar here one day. I still think about it today.

I have 9 guitars now. My best ones are a Fender Strat, a Gibson L5S and a Maton Jumbo cutaway acoustic. The Maton is the guitar I will be using when I perform in front of people. My musical goal is to play my guitar in pubs and clubs and make people happy and have fun. I have learnt 43 songs. This is the amount I need to do a gig. One of the songs I do is called “Knocking on Heavens Door”. It is the only song I do without looking at the paperwork and it is my best song.

Cameron

It’s lunch-time. I leave my desk and take the lift downstairs. I’m still getting used to working in the city, the bustle of students and the crowds on Swanston Street.

I need some cash for lunch so I walk to an ATM next to the Japanese restaurant where I intend to buy sushi. The ATM is in the lobby of a University residential tower and a group of students is milling around the machine negotiating the repayment of a small loan. I wait. A busker is playing guitar and singing out in the street. I had been aware of him as I came in, but I am paying more attention now, watching his fingers move around the chords of the song. I start rubbing the calluses on the fingers of my left hand. The chords the guitarist is playing are in my hands too; “under my fingers” as my guitar teacher says. He has recently been teaching me chord variations in different positions up and down the fretboard. I start thinking about E minor and the new ways I can play it. My fingers are involved in this thinking too, feeling out these new ‘grips’. The calluses on my fingers bear the material trace of this practice. I watch, E minor to D major to A dominant 7. I rub my calluses. The ATM is free.

Introduction

“Under my fingers”; learning to play the guitar involves a motile pedagogy of the hands, of fingerings and chord grips, dexterity and practice. Memory matters, concentration is essential, but the learning, the music of playing guitar, is all in the coordination of the left and right hands. What might an awareness of the corporeality of musicianship tell us about the experience of recovery, as described by Michael in the quotation reproduced above? Combining qualitative data derived from studies of young people’s recovery from mental illness (see Duff 2012; Duff et al. 2013), along with an autoethnographic account of my own guitar practise, this chapter outlines an affective and embodied pedagogy of the *actual process* of recovery from mental illness. I wager that sensitivity to Michael’s experience of learning to play guitar will reveal more of the process of recovery, and much about what recovery means in the context of living with chronic illness. Recent analysis of recovery in youth populations focuses on the goals that orient rehabilitation from mental health problems, such as the remission of symptoms, a return to paid employment, or improvement in ‘psycho-social’ functioning (see Leamy et al. 2011). Others have focused on the means of promoting recovery, such as improved access to clinical care and rehabilitation support, increased social and economic participation, and the promotion of personal “strengths” such as hope, resilience and self-efficacy (Ritter and Lampkin 2012).

In exploring these themes, scholars have helped to articulate the diagnostic and clinical utility of recovery, and to identify some of the unique social and psychological factors that facilitate young people’s recovery from mental illness (Slade et al. 2012). Yet this literature fails to account for the *diversity of recovery*

experiences, the ways recovery advances and retreats in keeping with the social and affective modulations of mental illness itself (Duff 2014, pp. 117–120). What is needed is an account of the “real experience” (Deleuze 1994, p. 68) of recovery; of the “work” individuals living with mental illness undertake in *learning how to recover*, how to manage their illness, to adapt to difficult circumstances, and to live meaningful, satisfying lives. Gilles Deleuze’s (1994) differentiation of “real” from “possible” experience suggests a conceptual and empirical distinction between recovery rendered as a generalised feature of the *possible* experience of a population of bodies (e.g. youth living with mental illness), and the actual (or “real”) experience of these bodies. As a conceptual model, recovery describes a set of possible experiences, “instead of grasping each existent in its novelty” (Deleuze 1988a, p. 20). Rather than characterise the real experience of individual bodies, their conditions and encounters, recovery describes a generic class of health enabling practices. This chapter relies on the heuristic example of learning to play the guitar to prise open the affective and embodied rhythms of recovery, the learning that underscores the “real experience” of recovery (see Duff 2014). I will start by briefly reviewing recent models of recovery, indicating how affective and embodied pedagogies may avail new ways of accounting for the processual aspects of recovery, before introducing my own (auto)ethnographic research. I will close with an assessment of how an attunement to affect and the body may lead to novel means of facilitating recovery in youth populations.

First Movement (Mental Illness and Recovery)

For many decades, the vast majority of mental illnesses like schizophrenia, depression and bipolar disorder were regarded as incurable, chronic conditions associated with significant disability and reduced quality of life (Ramon and Williams 2005). Even with rapid improvements in the range and efficacy of targeted pharmacotherapies, the goals of treatment were largely confined to the successful management of symptoms, and the progressive ‘stabilisation’ of the disorder (Cattan and Tilford 2006). Underpinning such prognoses was an explicitly biological model of mental illness, which treated these disorders as a part of pathological brain function. This “biomedical” model of mental illness, and its discrete etiology, remains hugely influential in contemporary responses to mental illness in youth populations, despite the emergence of competing paradigms offering divergent etiological explanations and diverse treatment indications (see Leamy et al. 2011 for a review). A feature of these newer paradigms has been an explicit rejection of the chronicity of mental illness, and an interest in the social and political contexts of mental health problems. All emphasise the significance of recovery in describing treatment plans for young people living with mental illness (Andreson et al. 2011, pp. 15–24).

Importantly, the notion of recovery acknowledges the interplay between biological factors (e.g. symptoms, genetic dispositions), psychological factors (e.g. cognitions, emotions, behaviour), environmental factors (e.g. access to support networks) and socio-political factors (e.g. stigma, mental health policy) in both the etiology and lived experience of mental illness (Ritter and Lampkin 2012). It also acknowledges that young people may lead healthy, productive and fulfilling lives despite the ongoing experience of symptoms associated with mental illness. Such a position explicitly repudiates the characterisation of recovery as ‘cure’, understood as the complete remission of symptoms caused by mental illness (Rowling 2006, pp. 101–106), and emphasises instead the diversity of treatment outcomes experienced by adolescents and young adults living with mental illness (see also Rudnick 2012). Indeed, advocacy among young people living with mental illness, and their families and supporters, has been crucial to the growth and impact of the recovery paradigm (Bradshaw et al. 2007). International “consumer” movements have contributed to the emergence of more dynamic understandings of recovery as individuals have provided testimony of their own experience of mental illness (Andresen et al. 2011). Subsequent shifts in the conceptualisation of recovery have also drawn on longitudinal studies demonstrating that recovery from mental illness is possible (Harrison et al. 2001; Jobe and Harrow 2005; Lysaker and Buck 2008). In a systematic review of this literature, Calabrese and Corrigan (2005) report that between 36 and 77 % of individuals recover from mental illnesses like schizophrenia, regardless of treatment modality. The authors conclude that recovery requires more than just passive compliance with pharmacological regimes, and that recovery is more of a process than a static outcome (see also Slade et al. 2012). These conclusions are echoed in recent qualitative accounts of mental health, which stress that recovery is unique to each person, and that treatment ought to focus on improving quality of life rather than focusing solely on mitigating symptoms associated with mental illness (see Davidson 2003; Ritter and Lampkin 2012).

Such insights are reflected more formally in the range of recovery models in use in youth mental health services in many countries. These include the ‘Boston Model’, the ‘Collaborative Model’, ‘Strengths and Resiliency’ frameworks and the ‘Functional Recovery’ model. Based on reviews compiled by Andresen and colleagues (2011, pp. 45–52), Leamy and colleagues (2011, pp. 445–52), Boardman (2010, pp. 37–41), Ramon and Williams (2005) and Ritter and Lampkin (2012), it is possible to identify six broad principles common to existing models of recovery. It is worth briefly describing these commonalities by way of contextualising the empirical analysis to follow later in this chapter. First, contemporary models stress that youth living with mental illness can learn, change, grow and adapt to their illness experience. Recovery is thus said to occur through continued learning, experimentation, collaboration, hope and support. Second, recovery models work from a resiliency framework to identify and promote the strengths, capabilities and aspirations of young people in recovery. This contrasts with biomedical models which focus on alleviating symptoms and remediating deficits. By promoting resiliency, young people living with mental illness are affirmed in their capacity to contribute to their own recovery, to combat the specific effects of their illness, and

to develop a more positive self-identity. Third, recovery models endorse an equal, open and collaborative relationship between consumers, family, carers and health-care providers. All are regarded as having important contributions to make to the everyday experience of recovery. Fourth, all recovery models emphasise a young person's right to self-determination in the development of recovery goals, including the right to make choices that may lead to mistakes, what is sometimes called the "dignity of risk" (Anthony 2000). Fifth, recovery models typically identify the wider community as the most important source of the resources needed to facilitate growth and recovery for youth living with mental illness, as opposed to emphasising the 'helping' resources available in formal, clinical services. Finally, recovery models commonly assert that the most effective "recovery work" occurs in the "natural context" of a young person's private, family and community life (Parr 2008, pp. 33–37).

For all of this interest in the *process* of recovery, and the most effective means of promoting it, dedicated analyses of the everyday, lived experience of recovery have appeared only rarely in the scholarly literature (for exceptions see Davidson 2003; Goffman 1968; Parr 2008). What recovery may be said to involve has been the subject of near continuous debate, and yet few scholars have attended to the social, affective and corporeal changes young people undergo in the course of their recovery. My point is that accounts of the actual embodied experience of recovery are uncommon, despite enduring scholarly interest in the diagnostic and clinical utility of recovery as a principle of mental health care. It appears reasonable to ask, in this context, what recovery feels like, what changes it involves for young people living with mental illness, and how youth come to recognise themselves as being 'in recovery' (see also Davidson and Roe 2007, pp. 459–463). In asking these questions, my concern is to draw attention to the *affected body of recovery*; to worry a little less about what recovery entails, in favour of thinking a little more about what recovery involves in the course of one's "becoming well" (Duff 2014, p. 185). Such a focus chimes with recent interest in delineating specific "stages of recovery" (see Leamy et al. 2011, pp. 449–451). In a widely cited model, Andresen, Caputi and Oades (2006, p. 973) propose five stages of recovery—moratorium; awareness; preparation; rebuilding and growth—which has, more recently, furnished the conceptual basis for a validated measure of progress in recovery called the Stages of Recovery Instrument (STORI) (see Andresen et al. 2011). My interest in the affected body of recovery aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the labour involved in progressing through these stages. While the STORI provides a quantitative measure of change, I hope to avail a qualitative account of how such change occurs and what it feels like. I will be guided in this effort by recent discussions of affective pedagogy.

Second Movement (Affective Pedagogies)

Strongly influenced by Gilles Deleuze's differentiation of 'education', 'teaching' and 'learning' (Bogue 2004, pp. 340–41), scholars in literary criticism, education and performance studies have recently introduced the idea and practice of affective (or embodied) pedagogies (Hickey-Moody 2013; Masny and Cole 2009; Probyn 2004). Eschewing 'common sense' understandings of the pedagogical exchange—the process whereby knowledge is ostensibly transferred in a linear relationship between expert and novice subjects—affective pedagogies highlight the embodied, intensive and material aspects of learning. Deleuze (1994, pp. 164–6) construes learning as a rupture or shock in which a body, whether human or nonhuman, is opened up to forces of difference and becoming. From this perspective, learning is best understood as an intensive process of affective and material production in which forces, sensations and intensities are transmitted between bodies in ways that transform their distinctive capacities. Learning is less cognitive than affective in this respect, insofar as bodies learn as their capacities for affecting and being affected are transformed by the array of entities they encounter. Anna Hickey-Moody (2013) has developed these insights in research with children and young people of the ways discrete pedagogical modalities work to transform the materiality of bodies, signs and texts. Noting important differences in the pedagogical effects of literature, sound, and movement, and the ways each are positioned as discrete learning modalities, Hickey-Moody (2009) elaborates novel affective strategies for transforming 'bodies of learning' in varied communities of practice. Semetsky (2009, pp. 451–54) has argued that such pedagogies enable and extend the various forms of "affective knowledge" by which bodies are transformed in the event of their "effective learning".

Underscoring the significance of affects, bodies and encounters in the experience of learning, Deleuze (1994, p. 139) remarks that,

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter ... It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed.

Insofar as encounters force one to think, learning is a function of those encounters that enable a body to increase the array of objects, bodies and entities it may affect and be affected by. Learning provides a means of ascribing meaning to experience by establishing a basis for explaining how and why bodies affect one another in their encounters. In this respect, learning is an intensive function of thinking. Thinking, however, is radically recast in Deleuze's (1988b, pp. 102–04) philosophy as a "compound of forces" that "invests" the body, causing it to compose novel relations with other bodies, provoking a kind of intensive learning. It follows that thinking is primarily an affective process in which bodies learn how to relate to (or 'compose themselves' with) other bodies, both human and nonhuman, in the midst of their encounters. This is why Deleuze (1994, pp. 165–167) insists that learning must be reconceived as an affective process, rather than a technical

training. One does not recognise ideas as true without first sensing this truth, without first feeling the force of truth experienced as a shock that carries the body beyond itself. Bodies learn in specific encounters that force them to think, to grow or change as they adapt to novel circumstances.

In this respect, all learning emerges in response to a problem. Examples include the problem of driving a car, staying in love, understanding great literature, or finding a job. Learning describes the process by which bodies come to recognise, respond to and occasionally solve problems as they are encountered in life. This suggests, in turn, that learning may be said to entail an experimental ethos, and not some kind of felicitous dividend derived from the transfer and subsequent recognition of ‘ideas’. The ethos proper to learning requires what Deleuze (2000, p. 4) memorably calls an “apprenticeship to signs”. Just as the carpenter learns by “becoming sensitive to the signs of wood”, and the physician acquires her skill by “becoming sensitive to the signs of disease” (Deleuze 2000, p. 4), learning, no matter what the discipline or objective, entails a process of becoming sensitive to signs and events; learning how to identify, decipher and manipulate them; learning how to be affected by them, and to affect them in turn. Deleuze (1994, p. 165) provides the example of swimming to clarify this process. In learning to swim one must discover a means of affecting the water—just as one must allow oneself to be affected by it—in order to acquire a capacity for buoyancy and movement. At first, the novice swimmer is confounded by the fecundity of signs emitted by the water. One must learn to ‘sense’ these signs in order to understand when and how to breath to enable the movement of one’s limbs; how to coordinate these movements to enable propulsion through the water; how to allow oneself to be affected by the water so as to exploit its capacity to support buoyancy, and so on. In each respect, learning involves complex processes of becoming sensitive to signs as bodies confront and adapt to problems in experience.

What might Deleuze’s idiosyncratic account of learning, and the affective pedagogy that Anna Hickey-Moody, Elspeth Probyn, Inna Semetsky and others have partially derived from it, reveal about young people’s experience of recovery, and the learning that punctuates this experience? Following Deleuze, mental illness may be regarded as a problem that requires unique affective and embodied learning for its management. Put another way, recovery from mental illness may be characterised as a process of gradual sensitisation to the signs and events of one’s becoming well. Picking up recent discussions of the importance of social and emotional learning in the course of recovery (Davidson 2003; Parr 2008), it is arguable that this process of ‘becoming well’ requires that young people living with mental illness learn how to manage and sustain the work of recovery. Drawing from Deleuze, I would add that such work entails a social, affective and cognitive pedagogy by which youth come to cultivate a unique *practice* of health (Duff 2014, p. 191). Shortly, I will return to Michael’s experience of learning to play guitar and what this experience may reveal about the labour of recovery. First, I will briefly describe the design of this research.

Interlude (Research Design, Aims and Methods)

The empirical material presented below is partially drawn from a series of three qualitative studies of young people's experiences of recovery from mental illness conducted in Melbourne, Australia (see Duff 2012, 2014; Duff et al. 2013 for details). These studies investigated how recovery advances and retreats in everyday life, how young people come to recognise themselves as being 'in recovery', how they assess progress towards their recovery goals, and how youth comprehend their own health and wellbeing in the context of living with chronic illness. Data collection for the first study commenced in March 2011, with the last of the fieldwork completed in October 2014. All participants were required to be aged over 18 years; to be competent in written and spoken English; and to self-identify as being 'in recovery' from a mental illness. Monash University's Human Research Ethics Committee approved each study. Forty-five young adults aged between 22 and 29 years participated across the three studies. Self-reported mental illnesses included bi-polar disorder (N = 18); depression (N = 14); schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder (N = 11); and Asperger's (N = 2). Most participants were recruited via Psychiatric Disability and Rehabilitation Services in the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne, facilitating recruitment from a range of socio-economic communities. A small number (N = 5) were recruited following referrals from primary participants.

Throughout these projects, I employed the notion of "enabling resources" (Duff 2011, pp. 152–53) to examine the social, material and affective conditions of recovery. Informed by recent developments in the recovery literature (see Leamy et al. 2011; Slade et al. 2012), I was also interested in exploring how formal and informal relationships, services and supports may work to facilitate young people's experiences of recovery (Duff 2012). Each of these studies adopted varied qualitative methods—including mapping, interview and 'visual' techniques—to generate rich descriptions of the experience of recovery. Alert to developments in 'sensory ethnography' (Pink 2009), 'affective pedagogies' (Probyn 2004) and 'emotional geographies' (Davidson et al. 2007), I was interested in employing methods that might capture the actual experience of recovery, and its durational resonances in encounters between bodies. Further inspired by J-D Dewsbury's (2010, pp. 321–24) seven injunctions for the conduct of "affect-based" qualitative research, all participant interviews were conducted with sensitivity to the affective traces of bodies (human and non-human) encountering one another in specific times and places. Along with Pink (2009), I treated the bodies of my participants (and my own embodied experience as a social researcher) as important vectors of these modulations. This involved close attention to the affective dispositions exhibited and described by participants in the course of their interviews. Equally, it involved sustained interest in encounters between bodies, as they were enacted and described throughout the interviews. By concentrating on the "nervous energies, amplitudes and thresholds" (Dewsbury 2010, p. 327) enacted by each participant, I became more sensitive to the affective resonances they evoked.

The autoethnographic element of the study emerged more serendipitously as I began interacting with Michael (a pseudonym) in early 2013. Michael participated in a project concentrating on the lived experience of recovery, in which he was keen to talk about the role of music in his personal “recovery story”. This particular project involved the use of visual methods, including photography and digital story-telling (see Duff 2012, p. 1390), to investigate young people’s experience of recovery. Along with other participants, Michael was asked to take photographs of people, places, pastimes or activities that somehow facilitated his recovery. Michael responded by taking photographs of his guitars (like the one reproduced on the first page of this chapter) and related musical accessories, such as a guitar tuner, capo and a plectrum. Given my own interest in and experience of learning how to play guitar, Michael and I quickly discovered a shared pleasure in talking about music, and these discussions rank among the most profound and enjoyable of my research career.

I found that I began talking about myself and my own experiences in these discussions in ways that contradicted some of the conventions of ‘good’ interview methods in the health and social sciences. Mindful, however, of the methodological advice offered by Pink (2009), Dewsbury (2010) and Hickey-Moody (2013), among others, I decided to persevere with a more personal, auto-ethnographic approach to these discussions. In thinking about how to ‘write up’ Michael’s research materials, it became apparent that the autoethnographic “connection” between autobiography and the formal social, political and cultural objects of my analysis would avail the most effective method (Ellis and Adams 2014, p. 254). I was particularly interested in the reflexivity inherent to all autoethnographic research in light of my experience speaking with Michael. I was equally drawn to the idea of a more “socially conscious” research practice that works at the “intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political” (Ellis and Adams 2014, p. 254). In each respect, the principles of autoethnography appeared to me to cohere in significant ways with the methods and techniques of affective pedagogy and emotional geographies that were already informing the collection of qualitative data. In the next section I will present the fruits of this methodological assemblage in outlining what I discovered of the role of learning in the everyday work of recovery.

Third Movement (Learning to Play Guitar, Becoming Well)

Cameron

As scales, chord grips, arpeggios and modes move from tablature and sheet music into your hands—as you begin making music rather than merely thinking about it, or watching someone else demonstrate how it ought to be done—the signs by which music (sound) is conveyed move from a textual to a corporeal aspect. Notes

on a page move from your cognitive awareness, practise and memory, into the dexterity of your fingers and the blissful indifference of simply playing. Technical learning sinks into your hands and becomes an affective capacity for manipulating the steel strings and wood of the guitar to produce sound; dissonant, melodious, resonant.

Michael

I have decided to learn all my songs without looking at the sheet music. I believe that if I do this I will be playing and singing at my best in front of people. I have about 9 songs to learn before I am ready. I am going to tape the names of all 43 songs to the side of my guitar. This will be all I need to see to do a gig. When I have got my song list taped to the side of my guitar and I can play all the songs, I will go back to the hospital and give the patients a happy day to remember.

In my experience, guitarists love talking about guitars—how they feel to play, what they look like, and of course their ‘tone’, how they sound—and Michael was no different. As we began talking about making music, Michael offered a detailed account of his 9 guitars, when and how he had acquired them and which were his favourites. We reminisced about our first guitars, how terrible they sounded and how difficult they were to play, although I shared with Michael how much I regretted giving my first guitar away and how impressed I was that he had kept his “crappy Ibanez”.





Naturally, I was keen to speak with Michael about why, for the purposes of the current study, he had associated guitar playing with recovery. Michael replied that:

I think anyone can learn to play guitar if they really want to. And loads of people with mental illness have played guitar and been super successful. Syd Barrett (Pink Floyd) and Kurt Cobain (Nirvana), I love their music, and I always thought that playing guitar must be good for you. And like I said before when that woman played for us at Werribee, I got such a good feeling from that day that I wanted to have it all the time if I could, to play guitar every day.

I decided to press Michael on this “good feeling” and what it meant for him. He said:

You know how a really good acoustic guitar, like my Maton I showed you before, how it feels when you play it? How it fits against your chest when you sit down with it and the sound vibrates through your body when you strum an open E chord or something. I just love that sound, that feeling in your hands.

Interestingly as Michael was speaking he reached over to pick up his Maton guitar, which he had brought along to show me after I had told him at a previous meeting that I was thinking of buying one, and strummed the open E chord he had mentioned as if to emphasise his point. We talked for a bit about the sound of acoustic guitars and the ways a really good, expensive acoustic feels in your hands compared to cheaper models. I admired the Queensland maple his guitar was

partially made from and he passed it to me. Immediately I appreciated the guitar's feel and balance in my hands, what guitarists call an instrument's 'playability'. I played a few chords that I had been mucking around with and we talked about how "sweet" major 7th chords sound. We then discussed the differences between electric and acoustic guitars, and how acoustics can be hard to play if you have grown used to electric guitars, which as it turned out we both had. In each of these respects, our conversation emphasised the embodied and affective experience of playing guitar, even though we didn't speak in the conceptual terms introduced earlier in this chapter. Throughout our conversation we returned often to the *feel* of the guitar, how learning to play involves training and coordinating the hands and ears. Michael repeated the guitar teacher's mantra that if something doesn't sound good then it's probably not worth learning, something that teachers had also told me over the years. I confided that I had recently begun teaching my son a few chords on one of my old electric guitars, but that all he wanted to do was turn up the amplifier and make a "racket". We laughed about this and agreed that the visceral feel of playing, the noise guitars can make and how that sound affects you, are among the great thrills of playing.

I began wondering at this point in our conversation about practise. In my experience, practise can quickly erase the fun of playing, turning it into hard work. I shared with Michael how learning scales and arpeggios had really turned me off guitar when I was in my early twenties, and how this had led me to stop paying for lessons. Interesting, Michael had a different take on lessons and practise. He told me how he had first started playing guitar with a support worker at a youth mental health service who showed him some chords. The support worker had told him that you have to practise every day if you want to improve, and how lots of people with mental health problems find music to be very therapeutic. After paying for a course of professional lessons, and purchasing some instructional books and DVDs, Michael recounted how much he enjoyed learning how chords and scales fit together, and how thrilling it was to learn how to play songs by his favourite artists like Bob Dylan. He recalled:

'Knocking on Heaven's Door' you know that's in the key of G so it starts on the tonic and then moves to D major and A minor 7 and C in the chorus. It's a pretty simple progression, just I, V, II, IV from memory. And I just loved learning that. Like I found that I really wanted to work hard on learning something, and that was just about the first time I had really felt like that.

Once again, I asked Michael how this experience meshed with his recovery, given the ways he had earlier connected the two. Michael said that practising guitar had given him a way of structuring his time, focusing his energies and "doing something good, healthy for myself, my state of mind you know". We spoke for a while about the therapeutic aspects of music. Michael said that playing guitar almost always made him feel better, but that it also reminded him of how you have to persevere if you want to achieve something. He added; "I'm trying really hard to memorise enough songs so I can play a gig, make people happy with my music, and it really is the same with my illness, I have to try really hard to keep going, to stay

healthy”. I replied that his comments reminded me of Larry Davidson’s (2003) observations about the “work” of recovery, and my sense that one has to learn particular activities, relationships, habits and dispositions that might sustain this work over time. Michael agreed at once, noting how playing guitar helped with his recovery, perhaps most importantly by making him feel better, particularly on his “bad days”. He said:

The thing with mental illness is that you have good days and bad days. Like days when you think everything is fine and then days when everything goes to shit. So to find something like the guitar that can make you feel a bit better, that you can do just about anywhere, like I always take my guitar with me when I visit friends or family whatever, then that just makes such a difference.

Coda

For Michael, learning to play guitar has been an important feature of his enduring struggle to recover from the onset of mental illness. Playing guitar is part of the daily labour Michael undertakes to manage this illness. Sensitive to the affective dimensions of Michael’s recovery, my analysis has sought to highlight the embodied aspects of learning to play guitar as a way of elaborating something of the process of recovery. Recovery involves risk, courage and transformation. It is a project; an always unfinished process of combatting the stigma of mental illness and its ‘tarnished identities’, managing the symptoms of illness and disorder, rebuilding one’s social networks, and maintaining a sense of hope for the future (Slade et al. 2012, pp. 99–101). All of these things are lived and felt. They all leave a corporeal trace. Paying attention to these affective and corporeal traces reveals much of the work of recovery, yet it also helps to clarify what recovery actually is. For all its stated interest in processes, the existing recovery literature tends to emphasise outcomes instead, often as a way of delineating the goals of recovery. Examples include a return to training or paid employment, a reduction in symptoms, improved personal relationships, or living independently (see Leamy et al. 2011). As important as these outcomes are, their deployment as proxies for the work of recovery reveals little of the ways recovery advances and retreats in everyday life. It fails to account for how a return to work, for example, is actually achieved in terms of the confidence, hope, self-esteem, trust and optimism required to maintain a job (see Davidson 2003).

My point is that finding a job, moving into one’s own home, or working on one’s personal relationships are indicators of recovery, but they do not capture what recovery actually is, and the personal growth, the learning that sustains it. I would argue that recovery is thoroughly affective in character insofar as it entails the gradual acquisition of novel capacities to positively affect, and be affected by, the bodies (human and nonhuman) that one encounters. Recovery involves a gradual increase in one’s “power of acting” and a commensurate increase in one’s “scope of

activity”, understood in each instance by way of the settings and encounters in which one can act, affect others, make choices, learn and grow (see Duff 2014, pp. 188–192). Conceived in these terms, the embodied and affective rudiments of recovery can be observed in the growing facility with which Michael has learnt to play guitar. Michael observed how learning to play has helped him structure his time, giving him something to focus on, while also improving his mood and sense of hope and optimism. It has also given Michael a goal, a desire to share his talent with other people, to play his music for them and give them “a happy day to remember”. This is the learning essential for Michael’s recovery, yet it also provides an insight into what recovery has actually entailed for Michael, as he has come to understand it. The notion of affective pedagogy, with its sensitivities to the ways bodies learn as they acquire novel affective capacities, has helped to illuminate these aspects of Michael’s recovery experience. If recovery ultimately describes an improvement in the quality of life, then Michael’s efforts to learn to play guitar ought to be understood as one particular instance or practice by which this quality has grown for Michael. As chords, scales, keys and ‘licks’ have sunk into Michael’s hands, transforming his relationship to the guitar and the ways he may affect and be affected by this instrument, a line of becoming well has opened up for Michael. This line describes a pragmatic means of learning how to be healthy, how to manage mental illness in the context of living well, enjoying life, making plans for the future, and staying healthy.

The very notion of health is often characterised in terms of capacities, resources and skills (Duff 2014, pp. 64–68). To be healthy is to be capable of exercising a wide range of capacities as they accord with one’s sense of a meaningful, enjoyable life. Recovery may be understood in this context in terms of the acquisition (or recovery) of specific capacities or “life-skills”, as a process of learning how to live a meaningful life in the midst of chronic illness (Davidson 2003). This is why Michael’s account of learning to play guitar is so compelling, because it refocuses attention on the means by which young people in recovery learn and relearn the art of living well. This is an affective, embodied art (Deleuze 1988b, pp. 100–104). The lessons of Michael’s experience for the design and delivery of rehabilitation programs for youth living with mental illness may be discerned in his description of the *practise* of becoming well. The practise of recovery must be invented in each case anew. Lessons may be learned from the experience of others, from the guidance of health care providers, and the support of family and friends. However, the means of recovering from mental illness must be tailored to the unique instantiations of such disorders in each individual context. Recovery describes a mix of affective capacities by which young people combat the signs and effects of illness in the course of becoming well. For Michael, among the most significant of these capacities is the skill with which he may affect and be affected by one or another of his 9 guitars. The feel of his Maton cutaway against his side, resonating in his hands, is the feel of Michael’s becoming well. What other affective capacities may promote recovery from mental illness remains to be seen, to be experienced, to be investigated, yet the learning body will be central to each.

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‘She Was Becoming Too Healthy and It Was Just Becoming Dangerous’: Body Work and Assemblages of Health

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Abstract This chapter builds on recent theoretical developments in sociological and feminist theory to pursue non-foundational or non-dualist approaches to studying the body beyond the ‘human agent’ in relation to health. The paper unpacks the complex ways ‘health’ was conceptualised and embodied in relation to social life, drawing on qualitative interview data with young people in Australia about their body work practices. Health was described in interviews as a set of practices, activities or performances that involve the body and have social dimensions. Health is commonly understood to entail a state of being that can be attained through a series of practices such as diet and exercise. However, as participants describe, the experience of ‘health’ is not the straightforward result of undertaking ‘healthy’ practices, and these practices require negotiation so as not to slip over and become ‘dangerous’ such as through under-eating or over-exercising. Understanding health as assemblages (Duff 2014) which are embodied and produced through a range of networks and relations can assist us to understand the complex and contradictory ways health is engaged with and produced in young people’s lives. Body work practices are key dimensions of health assemblages. This approach can also assist in unsettling simplistic links between health and ‘healthy’ practices, and health and appearance.

Introduction

In contemporary sociology, practices aimed at regulating body shape and physical control are understood as central aspects of identity (Featherstone 2010; Gill et al. 2005). In relation to young people, a concern for body shape is often associated with concerns related to poor body image or, paradoxically, in positive terms related to efforts to negate ‘risks’ associated with obesity. This chapter seeks to

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continue to expand on discussions of the complex nature and experience of 'health' in relation to youth, gender and the body. Currently, the aesthetic body is both a site of intense focus and concern for young people, as well as a key focus of academic and theoretical study.

Attention to health and young people's bodies in education and public health promotion strategies is commonly centred on young people's bodies as the sites of 'problems', for example the 'risks' related to growing figures of childhood and youth obesity (Lupton 2012), poor body image, eating disorders, binge drinking and sexuality (Paechter 2011), and particularly panics related to young women, 'sexting' and social media (Dobson 2013; Harvey et al. 2013; Ringrose et al. 2013). The current emphasis on health is linked to a range of social, cultural and economic factors; in particular, the significant expansion of leisure, cosmetic, beauty and fitness industries that has occurred since the 1980s (Shilling 2003; Lupton 1995). The media is also a crucial dimension of the industry of health through health and fitness magazines (Dworkin and Wachs 2009), the popularity of reality television shows promoting weight-loss and fitness (Moore 2010) and new social media sites such as Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook which are fast-becoming the prime means of marketing and advertising (Holmes 2014).

During the second half of the twentieth century, a shift occurred in the culture of advanced capitalist societies in which conspicuous consumption became central in the ethos accompanying hard work in the realm of production (Shilling 2007; Featherstone 1982). Sociologists argue that as a result of this shift, embodiment and the physical body came to be treated as both a 'project' and a 'form of physical capital' (Bourdieu 1977; Shilling 2003, 2007; Mears 2014). Featherstone (2010) has argued that consumer culture is obsessed with the body, and that through consuming products and pursuing health 'strategies', the positive benefits of bodily transformative work form the dominant narrative related to the 'image' of health. 'Transformations' of the body achieved through cosmetic surgery and the 'look good, feel good' logic of consumer culture 'is presented as within the reach of all' (Featherstone 2010, p. 202). In this environment, 'looking healthy' is equated with looking 'young' and 'sexy' (Atkinson and Monaghan 2014). Numerous authors have theorised the link between cultural developments with an emphasis on consumption and the effect this has had on the way the body is approached as an 'object' to be worked on and improved (Bartky 1990; Bordo 2003; Crossley 2006; Dworkin and Wachs 2009).

Crossley (2006) points to the particular conditions accompanying consumer culture logic in the current neoliberal context which encourages people to reflexively 'self fashion' their bodies and selves through consuming a range of products. The cosmetic, beauty, fitness and leisure industries all cater to the self-consciously constructing consumer (Featherstone 1982, p. 21). The implicit individualism of consumer culture's attitude to the body means that any structural and cultural disadvantages and inequalities are made invisible. In this context, certain lifestyles and bodies are privileged and marked with morality, while others are marginalised and excluded. The effects of social inequalities and locations such as gender, class, race and sexuality are obscured (Mears 2014), masking the structural production of

health disparities (Dworkin and Wachs 2009, p. 21). Current discourses of health and body image in consumer culture can be understood as important in how bodies become 'organised in socially and culturally recognisable ways' (Coleman 2009).

'Body work' is defined as the practices or 'work' one performs on one's own body (Gimlin 2007). 'Body work' can also refer to all forms of bodily labour such as in caring and welfare industries and domestic labour (Shilling 2011). Recent work by Mears has also developed the term 'aesthetic labour', distinct from body work, to describe 'the practice of screening, managing, and controlling workers on the basis of their physical appearance' (Mears 2014). In this chapter, as described elsewhere (Coffey 2013a, b, 2014), I use the term body work to describe work performed on one's own body that connects to aesthetic modifications or maintenance of the body, particularly through everyday or 'healthy' practices such as monitoring diet and doing physical exercise.

The relationship between bodies and the 'social influence' of health as implicated in consumption practices is a tension in sociological work. There has been a tendency for perspectives on the relationship and interplay between bodies and the social to be dichotomised along the lines of seeing bodies as either predominantly powerless and passive victims of social forces beyond their control, and approaches which attempt to emphasise individuals' agency (for a critique see Coffey and Farrugia 2014). Numerous feminist sociologists from Grosz (1994) to the present (Budgeon 2015) have addressed this impasse, arguing for the need to move beyond dichotomised approaches to the body which historically been so thoroughly held in a binaristic referential relationship with the mind and order, logic and rationality as a legacy of Cartesian philosophy. New materialist and 'vitalist' perspectives, influenced by Deleuze, Guattari and other 'post-human' scholars have contributed to efforts to rethink the body beyond binaristic frameworks, as detailed in the next section.

Theory

A range of scholarly work in education and social sciences has theorised the relationship and interplay between the body and the social in an effort to understand the significance of the body in everyday life. Recent empirical work in these fields has begun to pursue non-foundational or non-dualist approaches to studying the body beyond the 'human agent' in relation to health (Fox and Ward 2008; Fox 2011; Duff 2014; Coffey 2014; Leahy 2014) and gender (Coffey 2012; Renold and Ringrose 2011; Ringrose 2013; Coleman 2009; Budgeon 2003). This approach seeks to understand health 'as a function of encounters between bodies, between forces and between practices' (Duff 2014), moving beyond 'human nature' as the prime ontological category of analysis to also explore the ways in which matter, affect, biology, technology, politics and other forces are crucial in 'assembling' what we understand as human and natural (Rose 2007).

Following this approach, in this chapter I discuss the work and concepts of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as a way of understanding the complex relations

between the body, health and gender, and broader historical and cultural contexts which frame these relations. The main concepts outlined here are assemblage and becoming. Assemblage is a key concept in Deleuzian work, and can perhaps most simply be described through the original, untranslated term of *agencement* which can be understood as ‘the making of something’ (Nilan 2015) or a way of ‘re-orienting the relation of the whole to the parts’ (Currier 2003, p.328) in how we theorise the encounters between bodies and other objects (Currier 2003). A body can be understood as both a component of assemblages, as formed by assemblages, and as an assemblage itself. Assemblages are ‘collections of connections’, including ‘flows, materials, intensities and practices...which congeal to produce transitory but functional assemblages’ (Currier 2003, p.326). This means that bodies, as assemblages, are not finished or stable but are continually being remade through these processes of engagement with other elements. In other words, assemblages may resemble what we understand to be relatively stable norms of ways of being (such as gendered embodiments, for example); however the concept of assemblage highlights the ways things form in contestation, and in relation to myriad other aspects, making them inherently unstable. Another way of describing an assemblage is as a set of relations which can include, for example, norms, discourses and patterns of meaning. Assemblages are not static, however, but continually connecting with other elements and entities. As a result, in this process, assemblages are functional connections, through which the conditions for further engagements and possibilities are generated.

This potential for generation and change is a central tenet of the ontology of Deleuzian theory, and has particular implications for how human and other bodies are conceptualised. Rather than understanding the human body as a biological, stable or natural entity, Deleuze conceptualises it as ‘a physiological and social institution, a relationship, an intense capacity that is sensed...it is a site where forces engage with each other’ (Goodchild 1997, p. 43). The concept ‘becoming’ is closely associated with assemblage (Phillips 2006). Deleuze’s (1992) framework of becoming refers to the process of connections and relations that forms (and reforms) the assemblage. Rather than asking ‘what are bodies’, or questioning the *being* of bodies, Deleuze (1992) asks ‘what can a body do?’ Or, what does the process of engagements that occurs in the (ongoing) formation of an assemblage make possible or impossible? This process of engagement, and (indeterminate) orientation towards action, can be understood as becoming. If assemblage is what is formed through engagement, becoming is the orientation which drives the ‘assembling’. To study becoming is to study the micro-processes of change that occur through affect and relations. Bodies are thus understood in the context of the connections and relations that are formed and their potential for becoming.

From this perspective, the current social, cultural and economic contexts form the ‘unstable assemblages in which humans are caught up’, and affect what the body can and cannot do (Rose 1996). Dominant discourses of health, for example, and its links with consumer culture and broader individualised responsibility comprise aspects of the health assemblage, and are thus key forces affecting the body. Fox (2011) describes the ill-health assemblage as comprising ‘the myriad physical,

psychological and social relations and affects that surround a body during an episode of ill-health' (Fox 2011, p.364). At its simplest, the assemblage could include: 'Organ—virus—immune system—symptoms' (Fox 2011, p.364); extending out to include the spaces of the doctor's surgery, hospital, substances of medications, and so on. Fox's point in describing an ill-health assemblage thus is to show that 'ill-health is shaped by these relations' (Fox 2011, p.364). This perspective can assist in analysing the ways in which broader ideologies of health and individualism, as part of the health assemblage, currently affect what the body can and cannot do. Analysing the specific practices and events that form understandings of health and bodies in this study enables an analysis of what bodies can do, how they connect, affect and are affected in the context of the unstable assemblages that form them.

This analysis aims to contribute to opening more complex understandings of the dynamics by which health is embodied. Thus, the analysis attends to the discursive aspects of health, but also seeks to move beyond a focus on 'health discourses' only to also consider the intensities and sensations which accompany the physical and embodied dimensions of 'health'. In so doing, the analysis aims to add further impetus approaches aimed at disrupting simplistic associations between 'health' and normative 'image' or appearance (Featherstone 2010).

Methods

Through 22 in-depth semi-structured interviews with men and women aged 18–33 in Melbourne, Australia, I explored participants' experiences of body work and broader understandings of health and gender. I recruited through asking personal contacts to forward electronic advertisements to their friends (not known to me) through Facebook and email, which enabled participants to self-select to be involved in this research. Participants were mainly white, middle class and heterosexual; with a range of professions and education levels. The aim was to explore how body work is done and how bodies are understood by those who self-selected to participate. Participants discussed a range of body work practices related to their identities such as exercising through jogging, attending classes at a gym or weights training, as well as diet, wearing make-up, tattooing and cosmetic surgery (Coffey 2013a, b, 2014). Many of these practices were undertaken by both men and women, with the exception of wearing make-up, tanning and cosmetic surgery, which were exclusive to women in this study. Only body work practices participants described as related to 'health' are discussed in this paper.

Health, Image and the Body

All participants connected health to their body work practices. Health was discussed in varying ways: as a set of ideas, linked to morals and individual responsibility (Kate says ‘I don’t feel as healthy as I should’) and applied to others’ bodies (Adam respects ‘people who respect their body and respect their health’); as a feeling (Gillian, Clare and Peter discuss the embodied sensations linked to exercise such as increased heart rate and endorphins); as related to identity and the experience of the self (‘I just want to feel healthy so that I feel happy’, as Paul says; Sam, Jason and Finn say they feel ‘better’ about themselves when they are ‘fit and strong’) and as linked to image and appearance (Angela, Kim and Victoria say that exercise helps them to maintain a ‘healthy shape’). These themes related to health—as discourse, image, and relation to the self—interconnect, and operate in complex ways (see Coffey 2014). The following examples focus on instances described by participants which transgress ‘health’ to show the contingent and unstable ways in which health is constructed and experienced. Through drawing on the concepts of assemblage and becoming I aim to show how these concepts can assist us to understand the ways health, the body and gender currently assemble in participants’ examples.

Unsettling Links Between ‘Health’ and ‘Healthy Practices’

Sara and Daniel, among others, referred to body work practices such as going to the gym and exercising as being potentially ‘addictive’, saying ‘people can get obsessed with it’. Sara describes that intensity and frequency are important dimensions in whether exercise routines can be considered ‘healthy’ or ‘obsessive’.

Sara Men and women can both become, like almost obsessed with it [working on their bodies], and do their routines every day and exercise and eat well and all that sort of thing, sure.

Julia So...you’re saying that people can get obsessed with going to the gym and things like that? Do you know people like that or...?

Sara I know people like that, and I know people who you know, how guys can use steroids or drugs to make themselves look better, and I’ve heard stories that once they start doing it, it becomes addictive and they have to do it every day... Like, you can look good but you don’t have to, it doesn’t have to be an obsession, you can work out twice a week and be healthy. You don’t have to go every day.

Julia So you think that’s the better way to be?

Sara Yeah definitely, do it, like, healthily. (Sara, 26, dental nurse)

Sara describes there is ‘nothing wrong’ with wanting to ‘look good’; however she understands the practices of those who exercise at the gym every day or use steroids as ‘obsessive’ rather than ‘healthy’. Sara’s exhortation that ‘there’s nothing

wrong with looking good and exercising' can be linked to ideological norms governing the individualised, self-reliant and responsible neoliberal subject which reward and encourage people to be healthy through 'lifestyle choices' (Atkinson and Monaghan 2014). She is also, however, critical of men in particular for 'going too far' and putting more effort towards the aesthetic appearance of muscles through intensive training and use of steroids. There is tension here between the cultural idealisation of 'fit looking bodies' and the significant work required towards this aesthetic ideal which may involve the use of synthetic hormonal drugs such as 'steroids'. However, as Atkinson and Monaghan (2014, p.17) have discussed in relation to body builders and postmodern images of health and fitness, 'the fit-looking (lean, muscular) body functions as a social symbol of health' and healthy existence. As Sara suggests, in this context, there is often a gap between health 'per se' and intensive activities aimed at the symbolic representation of health. Another participant, Ben, who had been lifting heavy weights almost daily for nearly 10 years to maintain a 'big, muscly' appearance says: 'I could say it was for the health benefits and everything, but...I can't really say that's the main reason for it.' Health is available as a discourse he 'could' draw upon to justify or explain his body work. The appearance of muscularity is typically linked with the *image* of 'healthy' masculinity, which can help to explain the continuing appeal of body-building and cultural ideals linking masculinity and muscularity (Atkinson and Monaghan 2014).

Clare, like Sara, complicates 'health' and practices that are generally understood by others as 'healthy' such as eating vegetables and exercising. A key reason for this is that Clare's former best friend's suffered anorexia. Clare describes this as the central example of what can happen when seemingly 'healthy' practices of eating 'healthily' and exercising can be taken too far and 'become dangerous':

One of my, um, she used to be my best friend, we're not close anymore - she got anorexia this year through stress and just, very bad treatment - like, she's very fit and healthy but all she ever did was exercise. And she, she ate, all I'd ever see her eat was lettuce. And she got to the point where she was becoming too healthy and it was just becoming dangerous. (Clare, 18, school student)

Clare describes that the practices of eating 'healthy' foods such as lettuce and exercising in themselves are not essentially 'good' (healthy) and may become problematic or even 'dangerous' if they are done 'too much'. Here, 'health' as practices can be just as dangerous as 'unhealthy' practices. 'Unhealthy' practices were particularly typified in Clare and others' examples of people they knew who were 'very overweight', who 'eat a lot of junk food and don't exercise'. Echoing arguments made by Webb and Quennerstedt (2010, p. 791), these bodies can be understood as 'risky'. 'Risky' bodies are read as unhealthy, overweight, 'not obedient and useful', and transgressive in what Webb and Quennerstedt (2010, p. 791) term a 'neoliberal, performative culture of health surveillance'.

'Doses' of Health

Clare describes being more 'self-conscious' of what she was eating when she was close to this girl 'because *she* was so self-conscious', but compares her own 'healthy' practices with her friend's in terms of 'doses':

I wasn't always, I wasn't very self-conscious, I've always been able to maintain a good figure and good lifestyle and things like that, she was always very much critical of what I ate. Because I eat a lot. I eat a LOT. I love my food and stuff like that, so, you know, I'd have a couple of packets of chips and some popcorn, like air-popped, and then for lunch I'd always have veggies, my capsicum, cucumber and carrot and an apple, I had like a veggie patch in my lunchbox, and I kind of even it out but she always saw me eating Shapes [savoury biscuits] and things like that, she didn't know I was actually eating quite healthily because I do eat quite healthily. She'd be like 'oh do you realise the amount of calories that are in that', and every time I went for something she'd look under at the packaging and be like, look at all the calories and the kilojoules. And when she ate something she'd be like, 'ok, I have to do this much now to run it off, to work it off'. Whereas I'll be like, I'll usually indulge on a Friday because I'll have 4 and a half hours of dancing coming up that night, where I know, whatever I eat now I'm going to work off, but I just, as long as I keep it in small doses and I exercise, in healthy doses, not unhealthy doses.

Clare describes eating and exercise as 'healthy' practices, yet they need to be managed as doses of 'health'. The practices in of themselves are not healthy, since they can be taken in the wrong 'dosage'. She describes in great detail how she negotiated eating 'healthily' through having a 'veggie patch' variety of vegetables, fruit and snacks for lunch at school whilst having the labels on her food closely surveilled by her friend 'every time' she went to eat something. Webb and Quennerstedt (2010) describe the ways 'performative health culture' plays out through surveillance at the levels of the personal, interpersonal, institutional and state levels at school, particularly through the monitoring of food, even to the content of students' lunchboxes. Clare is careful to manage an array of conflicting and precarious dimensions associated with food and girlhood. She 'loves food' but is concerned with 'maintaining' her 'figure' and a 'good lifestyle'. She is not as strict as her friend who calculates the exact amount of exercise needed to 'run off, work off' every calorie and kilojoule, but still strategises when she will 'indulge' so it will be 'worked off' incidentally through planned activities such as dance class. She approaches both 'healthy' practices of eating ('healthily') and exercise as needing to be carefully managed, because she has seen through her friend's experience that 'becoming too healthy can be dangerous'.

Others, including Gillian and Paul also refer to healthy practices as similarly needing to be managed as 'doses'. For example, Gillian says, 'I think a healthy dose of exercise is necessary to keep the body in shape'. The notion of health as something to be practiced or administered in 'doses' supports arguments that health is increasingly medicalised (Crawford 2006). As Suissa (2008) has argued, medicalisation of behaviour can have a particularly strong individualising effect, as problems which are primarily social are tested and treated as medical or pathological. Further, the instrumental approach Clare takes to managing healthy

practices as 'doses' relates to Moore's (2010) arguments about the gendered dimensions of the 'new paradigm of health'. Moore (2010) suggests that in the 'new paradigm of health' the healthy body is gendered 'feminine', because of associations that women are more likely to take care of their health and bodies in ways that are aligned with the goals of health promotion, such as individual risk-management and self-monitoring. She argues, 'put simply, our culture recommends that women take a good deal of interest in their appearance and bodies' (Moore 2010), and in Clare's example, this is undertaken through careful attention to what she eats how much exercise she does, and in careful contrast with her friend whose success in cultivating complete control over the body is 'becoming dangerous'.

To expand this analysis, following Duff, health in these examples can be understood as 'a function of encounters between bodies, between forces and between practices' (Duff 2014). Health is the function of the assemblage rather than a natural or given bodily state. This means it can be affected in numerous ways which are not pre-given or known in advance. In Sara's example, health is understood in relation to people who are 'obsessed' with their bodies, exercise routines, the space of the gym and use of steroids. Though attending the gym and exercising is commonly understood as a 'healthy' practice, the affects and intensities associated with these practices generate further dimensions of the practice, necessitating daily regimes and the potential for use of steroids to support the practice. The forces in this encounter include neoliberal ideologies and the individual requirement to manage bodily risks through exercise, symbolised in the cultural imagery of the 'fit looking body' (Atkinson and Monaghan 2014). Another force includes norms and ideals of masculinity through the desire to be muscular, further emphasising masculinity as signifying strength, capability and function (Gill et al. 2005).

In Clare's examples, health can be understood as a function of encounters with others (for example, her friend whose eating and exercise practices were 'becoming dangerous'; and through her friend's surveillance of the labels on Clare's food as well as her own); with spaces (including the school yard as shared spaces which enable other girls' foods to be scrutinised and criticised; and the space of the dancing class); objects (the lunchbox itself, containing a variety of foods); and practices like exercising to be negotiated and balanced in 'doses'. Broader forces of femininity and gender assemblages also come into play in the interactions between Clare and her friend, where 'maintaining a good figure' and rigorously monitoring and managing the body's appearance is a normalised feminine practice (Moore 2010). A focus on concepts of assemblage and becoming enables an understanding of 'health' as something which emerges from these encounters, rather than being 'pregiven' or immanent to 'human nature' or biology. As Duff argues, 'the human body cannot be regarded as naturally healthy, any more than any particular mix of human encounters can be said to be either innately healthy or innately dangerous' (Duff 2014, p. 186). This understanding assists in making sense of Clare's description of 'health' as having the potential to 'become dangerous' as health is not 'innate' or natural but generated through the body's encounters.

Discussion: Bodies, Assemblages and Becoming

In this final section, I return to the central concepts introduced earlier, assemblage and becoming, to further discuss how they may be useful in assisting understandings of the complex and messy dimensions of 'health'. These concepts enable an understanding of health as something that emerges through encounters. Simply, an assemblage can be understood as a range of relations including norms, discourses, ideals and practices which are dynamic and change over time. Duff describes health as 'a function of the assemblage'; as 'produced at the nexus of social, biological, political, affective and material forces' (Duff 2010, p. 185). The assemblage can be understood as the 'thing' being engaged within the examples above; that includes other bodies and objects, spaces, norms, ideas, practices, etc. Becoming, on the other hand, is the process of connection with assemblages which informs what a body can do; the conditions of possibility available for action (Fox and Ward 2008). Becoming describes the process by which the conditions for further engagement and possibility are generated. Stemming from this theorisation of bodies as unstable and in process (becoming), health can be understood as a force or discourse that is engaged with and produced differently, and different 'conditions of possibility' are available as a result.

In the above examples, gender also intersects with health as an assemblage which affects the body's possibilities. The norms, discourses, ideals and practices of 'health' as an *image* are profoundly gendered. For example, most participants in the study described a healthy male body as looking muscular, and specified that it is 'healthy' and 'natural' for men (not women) to be muscular. A focus on image as separate from health is defined by Sara as an 'unhealthy' preoccupation or even 'addiction', for example, when she discusses that men who use steroids to 'look better' overstep boundaries associated with body work and 'health'. Similarly, Clare describes 'health' as having the potential to 'become dangerous', and shows the complexity of health not as 'innate' or natural but generated through the body's encounters. It is important to interrogate the ways health assemblages such as those described here are cut across by a range of different normalising forces, such as gender, class, race and ethnicity and ability.

This analysis complicates any straightforwardly causal link between the experience of 'health' as the result of undertaking 'healthy' practices. Unsettling this link can assist in challenging the pervasiveness of 'look good, feel good' logic of consumer culture which currently dominates popular approaches to health and the body in advanced liberal societies such as Australia. It is clear from participants' examples that 'health' is not simply produced from activities broadly considered to lead to the experience of health, such as through eating 'healthy' food or exercising for fitness, as discursive analyses would show. Rather, a focus on the extra-discursive aspects of 'health'—as embodied processes of engagement and negotiation rather than concrete 'states' that can be unproblematically obtained through supposed healthy practices—enables a broader understanding of the nexus between health, bodies and the social.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to continue to expand on discussions of the complex nature and experience of 'health' in relation to youth, gender and the body. I have argued that conceptualising health and embodiment as processes of becoming (rather than being) can assist us to understand the complexity and messiness of health embodiments. This focus can also assist in developing further theoretically-grounded understandings of the body and the social (Adkins 2013).

The dominant 'images' of health are often static—that of lean, toned, tanned muscularity, or slenderness. However experience, lived physicality and embodiment are fluid, contingent and shifting. Through body work practices, the body may be worked on towards a desired 'image', yet the body is 'not a thing with a fixed or determined image' (Featherstone 2010, p. 208). Health, too is not a 'fixed thing with a determined image', so understandings of health as such are clearly problematic. This has implications for how 'health' is promoted and discussed in a range of settings, including education settings and health services, as discussions of health should centre not on how a person 'looks' but rather on lived, experiential factors. This approach also assists to further problematise links between health and 'healthy' practices, and health and appearance.

It is important to explore the ways the body is experienced and described in relation to health and body work in order to more fully engage with the embodied, sensory aspects of body work and health. Conceptualising health and embodiment as processes of becoming (rather than objective or essential states of being), as the process by which the body engages with social, conceptual and physical dimensions of health, can assist us to understand the complex and contradictory ways health is lived. This has particular implications for young people whose bodies are frequently the target of intervention through 'health' initiatives and moralising messages regarding sexuality and corporeality. However, the body (through body image concerns for example), clearly continues to be an important issue for young people themselves. As a result, it is important to continue to seek new tools which are up to the task of understanding the complexity and nuances of their concerns and experiences.

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Part III
Embodying Research and Pedagogy

‘Sticky’ Learning: Assembling Bodies, Objects and Affects at the Museum and Beyond

Dianne Mulcahy

Abstract This chapter contributes to current debates in school and museum education concerning the role and contribution of affect to learning. Taken to be the transmission of force or intensity across bodies, and to precede processes of cognition, affect serves to challenge currently established cognitivist, constructivist and representationalist forms of learning and knowledge in education. Guided by Deleuzian philosophy and drawing on case data collected over the course of a project investigating the potentialities of **affective** learning at the museum, it is argued that museum learning is ‘sticky’: it becomes attached through particular **affects** and has the capacity to leave a lasting impression. An outcome of encounters involving bodies, **objects** and **affects**, it brings forth new capacities for thinking, doing and being. The empirical material worked shows that bodies are a chief site of securing the circulation of affects, and that affective capacities of bodies are central to learning and can travel from one learning location (museum) to another (classroom). Importantly, these **capacities** can be highly political and ethical; they can activate learners’ **ethical** and political imaginations and induce attentiveness to otherness. Altogether, I propose that better understanding the phenomenon of learning and how it can be made to stick is a significant project in education. It affords consideration of the complex distributed agency (and pedagogic responsibility) that emerges from the breaking down of the subject-object and mind-body binaries and provides significant insights into and possibilities for a renewed practice of school and museum education.

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Introduction

This chapter contributes to current debates in school and museum education concerning the role and contribution of affect to learning. Its focus concerns how bodily relations and affect—the power to ‘affect and be affected’ through relations and connections (Massumi 2002, p. 15)—produce learning at the museum and what emerges from this process of production. Working with a model of affect as stickiness, it seeks to add to our understanding of what affects can *do* in learning, or to affects’ effects. Inspired by the work of Ahmed (2010, 2014a) on affect as ‘sticky’, it offers a different way of attending to the production and transfer of learning. For Ahmed (2014a, p. 11), ‘objects become sticky, or saturated with affect’ with objects being conceived as not only material objects but also concepts and signs (e.g. hate speech as ‘sticky signs’). And, ‘when objects are sticky they “pick up” traces of where they have been’ (Ahmed 2014b, p. 211) signalling the significance of stickiness when considering how learning might move between museums and schools. In an extended account, Ahmed (2014a, p. 91) states:

‘(S)tickiness involves a form of relationality, or a “withness”, in which the elements that are “with” get bound together. One can stick by a friend. One can get stuck in traffic. Some forms of stickiness are about holding things together. Some are about blockages or stopping things moving. When a sign or object becomes sticky it can function to ‘block’ the movement (of other things or signs) and it can function to bind (other things or signs) together. ... Stickiness then is about what objects do to other objects – it involves the transference of affect – but it is a relation of ‘doing’.

Thus, at the museum, it is expected that objects (e.g. exhibits, displays, concepts such as cultural diversity) will, through ‘affective transfer’, become sticky; they will engender effects, give rise to new capacities for thinking, doing and being, at least for some learners.

Foregrounding the sociality of affect, affect is taken to be a productive *force* that helps produce distinct kinds of learner and forms of learning. In line with other educational research on affect (Zembylas 2006, Skattebol 2010), an assumption taken into the empirical research of learning at the museum reported here is that affects and affective learning can powerfully address issues of social and environmental justice. The model of affect as stickiness makes affect crucial to the struggle against injustice. Here, affect is not taken to be the ground for action such as challenging an injustice, but as performative: ‘an effect of the repetition of some actions rather than others’ (Ahmed 2014a, p. 196). ‘Injustice is a question of how bodies come into contact with other bodies’ (ibid.) and response to injustice needs to be bodily, affective, albeit that the relation between injustice and affect is contingent. As Ahmed has it, ‘Injustice may work precisely through sustaining particular kinds of affective relations to social norms through what we do with our bodies’ (ibid.).

Guided by Deleuzian philosophy and bringing a materialist perspective to bear (Coole and Frost 2010, Fox and Alldred 2015, Barad 2007, Hultman and Lenz Taguchi 2010), I explore learning as material, affective and experienced. In a

materialist exploration of the production of learning, how learning manifests has less to do with learners' personal preferences (e.g. the currently popular notion within education of learning styles) and dispositions (e.g. the well-established idea within education of student motivation), and more to do with impersonal affective flow within assemblages. In Deleuzian philosophy, the term assemblage refers to the coming together of different kinds of entities, in order to produce something new (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Challenging established understandings of learning in education, the learner is 'not taken as origin but rather as a participant in a relay of forces, materialities, and affects' (Dawney 2013, p. 633). This challenge implies a shift in focus in pedagogic practice from affect as an inner psychological state of *human* being, to affect as embodied practices of assembly. Thus, in the data collected for the empirical research, affect is found in intensities that pass between bodies as museum objects are handled. It is not inherent in the 'handler'; other entities must be taken into account.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Initially, I provide a Deleuzian-inflected account of the concepts of affect and learning, drawing largely on the philosophical and educational literature. I then discuss the methodological approach of materialist social inquiry. In so doing, I give an account of learning as learning to be affected whereby strictly human-centred categories of learning and knowing are challenged. To expand the explanation of this approach, I describe the methods used to collect the empirical data reported here. Next, the chapter provides empirical accounts and analyses of the affective workings of learning at the museum and their effects. The concern here is with 'whether it (affective learning) works, and how it works, and who it works for' (Deleuze 1995, p. 22). Finally, the insights that the analyses undertaken provide for the practices of school and museum education are discussed with particular attention given in this discussion to the consequential character of sticky learning, its power to unsettle and open up possibilities for activating learners' ethical and political imaginations and addressing issues of social justice.

Thinking with Deleuze-Guattari: Bodies, Affects, Learning

Bodies and affect are considered to be *relational terms* within Deleuzian philosophy; they are not predominantly self-contained, individual and private entities or states:

Bodies of all sorts are in constant relation with other bodies. Some of these relations are compatible and give rise to joyful affects that may in turn increase the intensive capacity of a body; others are incompatible relations that give rise to sad or debilitating affects, which at their worst may entirely destroy a body's integrity (Gatens 2000, p. 64).

Framing the body in relational terms affords attention to what bodies at the museum and beyond *do*. Deploying a Spinozist idea of affect, Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 257) claim that:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, ... to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, ... to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.

Explaining the two aspects of affect that Spinoza used, Deleuze (1988) directs attention to (i) *affectus* which refers to the passage or transition of affect from one experiential state of the body to another and thus one capacity for action to another; and (ii) *affectio*, the particular state of the affected body as a result of its encounter with other bodies. Thus, affect can function respectively as force and capacity, as process and product: ‘a *process* in which one body acts upon another, and a *product* in the sense of a body’s capacity to affect and be affected’, to move and be moved (Zembylas 2006, p. 309, original emphasis). As Duff (2010, p. 627) has it:

Experienced at once in the body and in the mind, (*affectio*) captures something of the lived experience of affect as feeling or emotion in describing the ways encounters produce affects that are typically understood as temporal feeling states. One’s encounters make one feel a certain way after all. Spinoza’s real innovation however, lies in the introduction of the notion of affectus and the argument that affect involves a transition in the body’s power or capacities. Affect is more than a feeling or an emotion, it is also a potential for action, a dispositional orientation to the world.

In Spinoza’s schema, affect is understood in physical terms—‘affect as movement or modification’ (Dawney 2011, p. 600). As such, it does not necessitate a *human* body. ‘It is a physical rather than psychological principle’ (ibid.). ‘Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man [sic]’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 169).

Learning too is both a process and a product: a passage from one state to another (minimally, growth in knowledge) and a state as a result of making this passage (e.g. knowledgeability, capability, capacitation). Contrary to currently well-established conceptions of learning in education, that is cognitivist, constructivist and representationalist conceptions,¹ learning is a matter of both body and mind—‘learning with bodymind’ (Semetsky 2013). As Bogue (2004, p. 328) has it, ‘by “learning” Deleuze clearly does not mean the mere acquisition of any new skill or bit of information, but instead the accession to a new way of perceiving and understanding the world’. An affective, intensive and material process, “learning” always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of

¹While cognitivist, constructivist and representationalist accounts take a variety of directions and follow a number of influences, they share the understanding that a traditional knowing subject lies at the heart of learning and that this subject is separable from its relations with the world. Challenging cognitivist views of learning as largely centred on ‘mind’, sociocultural theories of learning tend to prevail in education. These theories are underscored by constructivism as a theory of knowledge. In representationalist knowledge practice, a clear cut is made between matter and meaning with the latter being the privileged term and practice. Knowledge is treated as something that is both independent of, and contained within, singular entities precluding a view of learning as affective *flow*.

a profound complicity between nature and mind' (Deleuze 1994, p. 165). In an oft-cited claim Deleuze (ibid., p. 139) states that,

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed.

In other words, and as Duff (2013, p. 195) claims, 'if encounters in and with the world force us to think, then learning should be understood as the outcome of those encounters which enable a body to expand or increase the array of bodies, objects and entities it may affect and be affected by'. Learning is an intensive process of affective and material production; a practice of affective assemblage (Mulcahy 2012, Mulcahy 2015). Deleuze 'construes learning as a rupture or shock in which a body, whether human or nonhuman, is opened up to forces of difference and becoming. Learning occurs on a line of becoming as a body is transformed or "recomposed" in the affects, forces, percepts and concepts it may establish relations with' (Duff 2013, p. 194).

A Methodological Note: Assembling an Account of Learning—Attending to Affect

As forwarded by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the term assemblage directs attention to the many, diverse and contesting actors, agencies and practices through which human subjects and material objects take form. An assemblage is dynamic not static; it is about doing, not being (Fox 2012, pp. 155–156). Needless to say, not all doings are of equal weight and significance. Some are of more consequence than others. Thus, in the context of learning at the museum, affective relations can help to raise concerns about social injustice as shown in the case material worked below. A museum learning assemblage is about the embodied *process* of learning, not about a state of being a learner, and comprises, as a minimum: body—mind—museum—objects. It is produced and coheres as a consequence of powerful affects that flow between its constituent elements and produces, in turn, body-capacities, such as the capacity to learn and engage affectively and ethically with the world.

I posit that learning at the museum involves an *entanglement* with objects (affective and otherwise) and is best approached methodologically through *new materialist social inquiry* (Fox and Alldred 2015). Concerned 'fundamentally with the material workings of power' (ibid), this kind of inquiry runs under a number of labels including 'relational materialist' (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi 2010; Abrahamsson et al. 2014), 'sociomateriality' (Fenwick et al. 2011; Orlikowski and Scott 2008), '(new) materialist' (Fox and Alldred 2015; Coole and Frost 2010, Bennett 2010), and 'postconstructionism' (Lykke 2011). It plays out variously in assemblage theory (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; DeLanda 2006), actor-network theory (Latour 2005; Law 2009) and material feminisms (Alaimo and Hekman 2008;

Warin 2014). ‘Incorporating insights from science, philosophy, and political theory, new materialists have sought to counter humanist ontologies by developing processual, excessive, and vital understandings of matter’ (Roberts 2014, p. 970). For present purposes, *relational materialist* theory provides particularly well for tracing flows of affect and the workings of power: ‘For it is in their (affective) relations that matters become political, whether those politics are loudly contested or silently endured. It is here that the question arises of *which relations to foster and in which direction to go*’ (Abrahamsson et al. 2014, p. 10, added emphasis).

Data and Methods: Studying Relations, Affects and Assemblages

Titled *Affective encounters: Teaching and learning for schools and communities through museums and collections*, the project reported here was a small-scale, one-year study (2013–2014) sponsored by the author’s University in collaboration with Museum Victoria, Australia’s largest public museum organisation. Utilising a purposeful sampling strategy, data were collected from museum curators and educators, and visiting school teachers and school students, at each of this museum’s three venues, Melbourne Museum, the Immigration Museum and Scienceworks (see: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/>). Video-based case studies of ‘naturally’ occurring interactions in selected exhibition spaces at these museums were conducted by the author, and her co-researchers, and accompanied by interviews undertaken with lead curators on these exhibitions (3 altogether), museum educators and participating teachers (6 altogether) and participating students (6 altogether). Altogether, 40 students took part in the filming, ranging in age from eight to sixteen with the filming at each museum being of approximately one hour’s duration. Students and visiting teachers were drawn from a Catholic primary school, an independent (non-government) girls’ secondary school and a government secondary college. The exhibitions in which the school visitors were filmed at each of the museums above respectively were: *The Melbourne Story*, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours*, and *Think Ahead*. Containing visceral prompts and inviting embodied experience, these exhibitions and their specific exhibits were deemed to furnish the conditions necessary for the study of affective learning. Given limitations of space, the data collected from Melbourne Museum and the Immigration Museum only are worked.

As shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 3, a small number of children were wearing GoPro cameras to ‘capture’ what they saw and said individually over the course of encounters. While the bodies under study were not exclusively human bodies, close attention was paid to human bodily movement and modification. Overall, the focus of the data analytic work undertaken by the research team was *what moved* the research participants and the researchers too. Reflecting analytic methods underwriting materialist inquiry which challenge conventional humanist qualitative research (St. Pierre and Jackson 2014), data are more encountered than read and the



Fig. 1 Year 3/4 children entering the poorer cottage. Photographer Benjamin Healley, © Museum Victoria



Fig. 2 Children exploring the contents of the living room of the poorer cottage

encounter with them is experimental: 'the researcher does not know in advance what onto-epistemological knowledge will emerge from the experimental mix of concepts, emotions, bodies, images and affects' (Davies 2014, p. 734). As researcher, one becomes-with the data (Lenz Taguchi 2012), one thinks with theory (Jackson and Mazzei 2012), and, rather than search the data for truth and meaning, one attempts to understand *how whatever is under study works* and *who it works for* (Deleuze 1995). The key questions asked when working with the empirical material were: how is affect and affective learning working at the museum and who is it working for? Does this learning come to stick and potentially travel to other sites and settings? To what end is this stickiness and potential movement? What is the ethical and political potential of the practice of sticky learning?



Fig. 3 Children exploring the contents of the living room of the poor but aspirational cottage

Learning to Be Affected/Being Affected to Learn: Assembling Bodies, Objects and Affects

Case 1 Little Lon: ‘It actually took my breath away’

A historic recreation of two workers’ cottages (Fig. 4) in an inner-city area of Melbourne with a reputation for being a slum, riddled with poverty, prostitution and drug addiction, the Little Lon exhibit at Melbourne Museum² offers an immersive sensory experience. Along with their adjoining backyards and outside toilets, ‘the cottages present two types of lived experience: one shows extreme poverty ... while the other is the home of a poor, working-class family, who live with some material comforts’ (Smith and Tout-Smith 2010, p. 43). Little Lon affords the opportunity to show how embodied capacities to learn are ‘increased or decreased by sounds, lights, smells, the atmospheres of places and people’ (Hickey-Moody 2013, p. 80).

Upon entering the two cottages, children were observed handling domestic items and trying out items (stools, sofas, beds) for size and comfort towards I infer, getting a ‘fix’ on the experience of living as a family in past times and in what was taken at the time to be a ‘pure slum’. I posit that learning is operating at the level of affect given the children’s bodily capacity for activity and responsiveness, ‘their immediate, sensate feeling’ (Dawney 2013, p. 632) as shown in Figs. 2 and 3.

²Melbourne Museum is a natural and cultural history museum located in Melbourne, the capital city of the Australian state of Victoria. Little Lon forms part of a single exhibition on the history of Melbourne, *The Melbourne Story*, and comprises a display which includes two cottages which are physically identical to those that would have populated the lanes of an inner-city area bounded by Lonsdale, Exhibition, Little Lonsdale and Spring Streets in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.



Fig. 4 Recreated cottages, with laneway in the distance

Affective flows of wonder and to some degree disgust at the living conditions were apparent as the children made their way, backwards and forwards, through the two cottages. In moving unsupervised by the museum educator and their classroom teacher from cottage to cottage, a space of affective energy and experimentation appeared to open up among them. Expressing distaste for the crowded conditions in the poorer cottage and specifically for the sanitary pan toilet, the conversation of one group of students progressed thus:

I couldn't live in this place ... so small and, we all have bigger houses and it makes us feel better like, what if we lived here, bit worried ...

Look, it's the toilet.

That's the toilet! Oooh.

Look at the toilet. Imagine ...

Just imagine.

Maybe I don't want to look in there (sanitary pan).

Yeah!

I'm already expecting that this house is poorer than the other house ... just makes you feel so bad for them.

Like the two beds in there are just like squished into each other, there's like barely any space.

As the less poor cottage's 'Other', 'this house (which) just makes you feel so bad for them' prompts attentiveness to the size and space of housing, present and past, and the social issues attaching to these materialities. The cottages can be claimed to have produced learning to be affected by differences (Latour 2004), an opening up to difference, here the difference between poor and less poor and the small houses inhabited by members of the Little Lon community in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and the large houses inhabited by many families today. These differences

are not only epistemically significant, providing comparative and historical knowledge, but also of political and ethical consequence. They constitute a political and ethical education by material means and an *empathic unsettlement* (LaCapra 1999)—‘I couldn’t live in this place’; ‘just makes you feel so bad for them’—which has the potential to ‘stick’ and leave a lasting impression.

The children at interview reported that they really liked the cottages. When asked what they might tell their parents about the visit to the museum, Joseph commented:

I’ll tell her (mother) that you know that Little Lonsdale Street wasn’t really rich, and they didn’t have, you know, that good houses. So they lived and they ... yeah they lived in such small houses, but they still ... they still lived in it and they didn’t care if it was big or not, they just wanted a house.

The notion of sticky objects (‘that good houses’; ‘they just wanted a house’) can be inferred from these data, as can the idea that these objects play into issues of social justice. Joseph observed a little later in the interview that Little Lon reflected:

things that represented fairness, like some of the objects and (living in) Little Lonsdale Street was like (they) shared their stuff because they were really poor. ... if you looked at the backyard(s), they were both connected. ... In the rich house, part of the window was like curtained, which is like it wasn’t connected.

Joseph appears aware of the exclusionary and privatising impulses of rich houses; the curtained window in the rich house and the desire it embeds produces a capacity to engage the ethical and social justice dimensions of this situation—‘things that represent(ed) fairness’. Earlier in the interview, he had observed ‘now we’ve got really big houses and back then they had really small houses’. In this instance, the encounter with the cottages can be claimed to have prompted critical and ethical thinking which aligns with affective response (Witcomb 2013). Tellingly, the children’s affective responses were shared by their teacher, Nicole:

(The cottages) actually took my breath away. I did not expect it to be ... I thought the first one we went into, which was the richer living, and then to move into the other one, you could see a huge difference. You know it was very bare, there was not the doily across the fireplace, the curtains were hessian bags, and it really took my breath away actually, I had to do a – ‘oh, goodness’ – I did not expect that because I had thought that the first one was, you know, poor enough in itself. And for me that was a really big learning curve. You know, you think you know a little bit about history and what it might have been like – the visual and the hands-on and the comparison then and there, it was very effective, very effective, yeah.

The viscosity of poverty produces disjunction between expectation and experience that for this adult learner serves to shock and induce an ‘oh, goodness’ moment, the affective response of the body. The irruption of affect in that moment, the bodily modification which is affect at work—‘it really took my breath away’—produce ‘a really big learning curve’, and imply an augmentation in this body-subject’s capacity to act, to teach differently perhaps (more visually and hands-on) when back at school. Certainly, we are ‘witness’ to a body ‘through

which affects—as thoughts and ideas—pass' (Dawney 2013, p. 634) and give rise to learning and I suggest, learning that will stick.

Case 2 *Tram Scenario*: 'Like I really felt the side of the victim'

Opening in 2011, the exhibition, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* within which the filming at the Immigration Museum was undertaken, attempts to address issues around diversity, difference, prejudice and racism. In the words of the museum educator at interview, 'the whole exhibition works on pulling at you and your awareness, and your self awareness'. This 'pulling work' is very evident in the affect anticipated³ by one of the exhibition's exhibits, Tram Scenario, a video that invites viewers to 'see a racist incident that takes place on a tram' (see: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/videos/tram-scenario-videos/tram-scenario/>). The scenario plays out in a tram-like structure in which museum visitors can sit and aims to have school visitors address the questions: who's next door?—how do we feel when difference moves in next door? Or sits next to us on the train or in the classroom?⁴ One of the Year 10 student visitors from the independent girls' secondary school tells the Tram Scenario at interview in these terms:

Well what happens is ... this guy ('Rob'), he walks on a tram, and this (other guy, 'Ibrahim') ... I think he's Aboriginal, or I think that's what I took from it, but he makes like ... I think he makes a spare seat for the guy to sit down next to him, but then the man doesn't sit next to him. And so ... and then he (Rob) starts ... he starts drinking, and then the Aboriginal guy gets on the phone and he starts talking in his native language to someone, and he (Rob) goes—'oh excuse me, you're too loud, can you lower the volume?' And he still wasn't sitting next to him, and then he... and then he just crushed his can and walked out of the tram.

Clearly, an attempt is being made by way of this exhibit to not only edify and inform but also to engineer affect toward effecting social change to discourses and practices of racism. As Walkerdine (2013, pp. 758–759) explains, a scenario is staged 'to shift relationship patterns' among radically different social groups: '(If we want to support change, it is necessary to create safe but challenging scenarios which might open up a person or group to the possibility of movement into something and somewhere new'. In addressing the question how does the Tram Scenario work and for whom?, I hold a copy of the transcript of the scenario which is available on the Museum Victoria website (see again the link above) against a copy of the conversation held by a small group of Year 10 girls while watching the Tram Scenario video. Many of the girls' remarks are made as direct address, the addressee, in all cases, being the figure of Rob.

³Baker (2008) draws a distinction between *didactic* affect which is anticipated by museums and *delirious* affect which is accidental and chaotic. In generating meaning in museums, 'both affective dimensions—didactic and delirious—operate simultaneously and are perhaps experientially inseparable'.

⁴See: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/whos-next-door/>.

Transcript: Tram Scenario

[Tram sounds and hum of conversations]
 [Tram door opening and closing beeps]
 [Can cracking open]
 [Phone rings]
 [Ibrahim speaks in Tigrinya language]
 [Drinking sounds]
 Rob: Hey, mate... Hey, hey! Can you keep it
 down a bit? You're a bit loud.
 [Can crushing]
 [Tram door opening and closing beeps]

Transcript: Viewing the video of Tram Scenario

[Background chat amongst girls]
 [Rob enters tram] Aaah. Excuse you!
Get out! Oh, my god ... he's so weird
 He's slurping really loudly.
 Oh my god, just sit down!

 Oh! Jeez. *You're* a bit loud! Your slurping's
 louder than he's talking!
 Oooh. He looks drunk ... oh, my god!

Affect is central. As Dawney (2011, p. 601, original emphasis) claims, 'language can operate *as* affect: it has the power to impact materially on the body, to course through and between bodies' as is evident in these data through the repetition of phrases such as 'Oh my god', 'Jeez', and 'Aaah'. Affect is performative: these repeated phrases serve to bring into effect outrage at the injustice of the racial abuse by Rob of Ibrahim, and produce an opening up to difference of various kinds—cultural, linguistic, generational. Something of this opening was evident in the affective response of Nelly, one of the students interviewed, to the tram scenario:

I felt terrible. Like I really felt the side of the victim watching that, and so I felt really bad, and I felt maybe like guilty for doing the same thing, like maybe I do that. So it made me think about my actions in relation to like what was happening.

Ahmed (2014a, p. 201, original emphasis) cautions that 'the emotional struggles against injustice are not about finding good or bad feelings, and then expressing them' but rather 'about how we are moved by feelings into a different relation to the norms that we wish to contest, or the wounds we wish to heal'. And, that this 'moving and being moved' is a form of work 'which opens up different kinds of attachments to others, in part through the recognition of this work *as* work' (ibid., original emphasis), much as the student above recounts as she continues with:

Oh I interpreted it (Rob *not* taking the seat next to Ibrahim) as ... well at first I thought of all the people on my bus,' cause I catch the bus every day, and how they just... I don't know why, they just don't sit down in spare seats. I think it's because they don't want to sit next to... I don't think it's the person, but I think it's just like they don't want to... they want to sit by themselves or with their friends, not someone they don't know. ... (W)hen I first started catching the bus, I was like those people, and I didn't want to sit next to other people because they were strangers and I didn't know them, not because they were a different race or something. But then I just started to learn that... I don't know... it doesn't really matter, yeah, it's a seat, it's a person, like there's nothing wrong with sitting next to whoever. So it kind of made me think back to that, and how people on my bus still do that.

Two mundane 'sticky' learning assemblages are in evidence here. Initially, Nelly (or Nelly as body-subject) is bound on the bus with other people who 'just don't sit down in spare seats. They want to sit by themselves or with their friends'. However, she then 'just started to learn that ... it doesn't really matter'. A new assemblage of bus–Nelly–spare seat–whoever, forms. Affect and affective learning are *bodily*

doings, literally a matter of sitting down in spare seats, or not, and sitting by oneself or with friends, or not. And, it can be inferred that if the pattern of these bodily doings does not change, learning does not emerge, and entrenched and arguably unhelpful social norms⁵ continue unchallenged.

In this 'micro' relational materialist analysis, stickiness is about what spare seats on a bus ride do to human bodies, their affective potential. Occupying a spare seat and sitting 'next to other people' invites the transference of affect (positive in the case under consideration) and the production of learning, a new knowing: 'like there's nothing wrong with sitting next to whoever'. While affects can be construed as thoughts and ideas, I propose that we have moved considerably here from a constructivist (sociocultural) and cognitivist model of learning. Affect and learning are, as it were, 'in a sticky relation' (Ahmed 2014a, p. 210). Sitting 'next to whoever' on the bus is a process and product of learning and, at the same time, an *affective intervention*, an 'explicit mobilisation of affect to produce new understandings of social interactions' (Zembylas 2006, p. 312). Albeit mundane, it is a political and ethically inflected act.

What Can 'Sticky' Learning Do?: Making Space for Social Justice

The learning-assemblages described above 'are produced and cohere as a consequence of the powerful affective flow between the elements they comprise' (Fox and Alldred 2013, p. 785). In the case of Little Lon, there is a learning assemblage comprising (in no particular order), at least: cottages—children's bodies—relatively unrestricted movement—domestic objects—sounds and smells—peer interaction—teacher not in attendance. In what can be called an informal, affective learning assemblage, learning 'proceeds according to the individuals' idiosyncratic encounters, and the affects and relations that attend these encounters' (Duff 2010, p. 624). Affective flow is very much in evidence between the Little Lon cottages and students' senses and bodies as it is between the tram video and students' language and life experience of taking trams and buses. I maintain that it is the *affective force* conferred by these museum learning-assemblages that enables learning to stick when making a museum visit and, in sticking, travel to other sites such as homes and classrooms, in which the capacity for learning and 'taste' of learning can be consolidated. Something of this power and potential to travel was evident in the linking by Nelly of the tram scenario to her everyday experience: 'like maybe I do that. So it made me think about my actions'.

Museum learning is 'sticky': it becomes attached through particular affects ('I felt maybe like guilty for doing the same thing') and has the capacity to leave an

⁵Placing distance between those one does not know on public transport ill affords 'opening oneself up to creative affective connections with the Other' (Zembylas 2006).

impression ('it made me think about my actions') and an impression of a potentially transformative kind. As Barad (2007, p. xi) has it, and as implied in Nelly's comments, it is in 'our connections and responsibilities to one another—that is entanglements' that a space for social justice can open up. Barad (2007, p. x) argues that justice

... is not a state that can be achieved once and for all. There are no solutions: There is only the ongoing practice of being open and alive, each intra-action, so that we might use our ability to respond, our responsibility, to help awaken, to breathe life into ever new possibilities for living justly.

The data worked here show something of this 'ongoing practice'. The point that matters for this discussion is that 'ethical practices emerge from material realities, and to ignore the materiality of bodies is to ignore the significant social injustices that accompany bodies' (Warin 2014, p. 16).

I contend that thinking learning as 'sticky' opens a space for teachers and learners to engage learning by bringing various and different dimensions to bear: cognitive, affective, ethical and political. These seemingly disparate dimensions are drawn together in *affective practice* (Wetherell 2012). For example, everyday classroom teachers deploy techniques such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice, along with curriculum materials, that can act as a force that produces an impetus to learn, while at the same time builds cognitive capacity (Mulcahy 2012). The entanglement of the affective and the ethical is evidenced in the empirical material: 'I'm already expecting that this house is poorer than the other house ... just makes you feel so bad for them'. It can be claimed that affects are a gateway to the ethical; they activate learners' ethical and political imaginations. In line with Duff's research on human development (2010, p. 621, original emphasis), I argue that 'affects and relations constitute the basic mechanisms by which capacities are acquired or exchanged; a process that obtains *in encounters* between bodies and between bodies and contexts'. Thinking through an affective lens, to better understand the phenomenon of learning and how it can be made to stick, is a significant project in education. A cognitivist bias continues to play out in education (Mulcahy 2015) taking attention from the ability of affect to accumulate within the body and promote the desire and capacity to learn (Watkins 2010, p. 279). I claim that learning can come to stick through *affective force* and the *accumulation* of force relations as is evident in the reiterating responses made by the Primary school children when coming across Little Lon's outside toilet: 'Look, it's the toilet. That's the toilet! Oooh. Look at the toilet. Imagine ... Just imagine'. Accumulating in the form of embodied capacities to look or not look ('Maybe I don't want to look in there'), and to imagine, dispositions towards learning develop (Watkins and Noble 2013). More generally, an affective lens affords consideration of the complex distributed agency (and pedagogic responsibility) that emerges from the breaking down of the subject-object and mind-body binaries and provides significant insights into, and possibilities for, a renewed practice of school and museum education. The idea of the learning-assemblage rather than the individual learner could, with profit, be the focus of museum education, radically re-casting learning as an

affective flow within assemblages of bodies, objects, values and ideas, which produces learner subjectivities and bodily capacities, including the capacity to learn, to think, to become and become-otherwise.

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Playing the Inside Out: Using Drama as an Embodied Medium Through Which to Work on Changing Gender Norms

Helen Cahill

Abstract This chapter takes a pedagogical focus, drawing on poststructuralist feminist theory to analyse the use of drama-based methods as an embodied and collective medium through which to identify and address the shaping impact of negative gender norms. It discusses work conducted within gender and sexuality education programs in developed and developing countries as the context within which to explore the use of these pedagogical methods. The chapter analyses use of embodied alter-ego techniques to deconstruct the way in which social discourses work to shape everyday lives. It charts the use of surrealist narrative conventions to provide a scene of address which permits players to disrupt limiting storylines about who it is possible to be, create new forms of recognition and real-ise alternative ways of doing the self. In this, it argues the need for a stronger link between theory and education practice in approaching the challenge of gender and sexuality education.

Introduction

Much of the work of poststructural philosophy has been to develop theories to help people understand how or why things happen the way they do. However, less attention has been given to the pedagogical implications of these theories for those using education as a tool for social change.

This paper discusses the need for pedagogical strategies which can be used within gender rights and sexuality education programs to assist participants in recognizing and articulating the way that social norms work in the construction and embodiment of gender. Sexuality and gender rights programs provide the ideal site for a focus on embodiment in learning. This is because the body is the specific site

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of focus: the body which has private parts, hidden thoughts, intimate relations, emotional yearnings, and social, physical and political vulnerabilities and strengths.

The traditional emphasis within school and community sexuality education programs has been on investing in knowledge and skills development, with the presumption that the educated person will be 'empowered' to better engage in self-care and to assert their rights and needs. The operative epistemological presumption tends to be that persons who are given access to knowledge, skills, services and resources, and who are groomed to possess the correct social attitudes, will then take protective and respectful actions.

Consequently, prevention education interventions, particularly those for youth, tend to emphasise provision of knowledge and development of self-care skills. The success of programs is measured in relation to their capacity to influence the use of protective behaviours. For example a meta-analysis of 67 studies addressing sexual risk-taking amongst adolescents appraised success in relation to increased condom use, and reduced rates of STI infections (Johnson et al. 2011). A review of 83 curriculum-based sex and HIV education programs for young people investigated the influence on the use of condoms and contraceptives (Kirby et al. 2007).

Despite recognition that choices about sexual activity are influenced by gender norms, education programs tend not to provide learning activities which focus on a critical engagement with social norms. There are some exceptions, for example, Kesby's work in the 'Stepping Stones' HIV education program in Zimbabwe (Kesby 2005). Kesby takes a poststructuralist perspective in discussing the challenge of 'empowerment' in relation to sexual health. He argues that participants in prevention programs do not so much become 'empowered', and then remain transformed and able to transact in a highly agentic way, but rather they perform themselves differently within different situations, according to the conditions of possibility constructed within those locations. Indeed, facilitators of such programs should be aware of the place-based nature of the program experience, whereby there will likely be a dissonance between the expression of the self that can be articulated within the workshop and that which can occur outside when no longer within the permissive and protective frame of the learning space (Kesby 2005). Kesby argues that the process of change in relation to sexual health empowerment should be understood more as "a repetitive performance in *space*" (p. 2057) than as a linear progression towards a state of attainment. However, the creation of possibility within one location is presumed to have some role in enabling the construction of possibility in other locations, albeit that other material and social influences in the surrounding environments will be at play in shaping patterns of behaviour.

Whilst attention to knowledge about the body, and methods through which to care for it are undoubtedly important within sexuality education, once a post-structuralist gender lens is applied, it is evident that participants should also be provided opportunity to engage critically with the way in which gender norms influence people's capacity to translate their knowledge into action.

If one takes a poststructural approach to understanding gender as socially constructed, then it will not be sufficient within an education program to address gender norms primarily through a focus on equity, justice or liberation. In the dominant

humanist tradition of thought, power is understood to be a possession held by some and used over others. Thus, empowerment is a matter of claiming back power, thus attaining justice or equity. However, power is understood differently within post-structuralism, and this has significant implications for those designing sexuality and gender rights programs.

In order to discuss implications for the pedagogy of change that might be presumed to be effective within a poststructuralist tradition of thought, I will first discuss some key theoretical constructs from this tradition. I will then explore ways in which I have found these constructs can be harnessed to inform an embodied approach to examining the influence of social norms on health-related behavior. In this, I argue the need for innovation in embodied educational practices as a vehicle through which to create the possibility of change in relation to restrictive and dis-enabling gender norms.

A Focus on Poststructuralist Theory

A great deal of attention is paid within poststructural theory to the way in which social discourses work to shape identity and the way in which institutional policies and dividing practices work to ‘govern’ the individual’s very sense of what is possible and desirable for themselves. Poststructuralist theory troubles our everyday understanding of the concept of ‘choice’. Foucault uses the construct of ‘governmentality’ to describe the way in which circulating sets of norms, practices and discourses work to shape and inform our sense of who we should be and how we should live (Foucault 1980). He argues that we internalise categories and norms and participate in our own surveillance and governance, policing our own behaviour and that of others. In the poststructuralist tradition, agency is understood to involve resistance, and change is achieved via an alertness to the shaping nature of the discourses. Davies describes this as the subject having available to them certain ‘conditions of possibility’ which he or she can then take up or resist (Davies et al. 2001). What is imagined to be possible and desirable will influence actions.

Butler (1999) uses a theatrical metaphor to carry her concept that identity is located in ‘doing’ rather than in ‘being’. In this it is a *performative* act. We are who we play ourselves to be, and the more we play out ourselves the more it seems true or natural to be who we are. Butler develops this thesis through her discussion of gender. She describes gender as something which appears natural and becomes believable simply because it is constantly being performed. The performances of gender appear within a collective agreement or set of norms and expectations that operate in such a way as to compel our agreement and belief in the ‘naturalness’ of gender. Thus, Butler argues that gender attributes “are not expressive but performative” (Butler 1999: 180).

Following Foucault, Davies notes that poststructural theory “opens up the possibility of a quite different set of strategies for working with both boys and girls

based on a radically different conceptualisation of the process of becoming a (gendered) person.” (Davies 1993, p. 2). She further argues that

Poststructuralism opens up the possibility of agency to the subject through the very act of making visible the discursive threads through which their experience of themselves as specific beings is woven. It also defines discourse and structure as something which can be acted upon and changed. (p. 12)

Davies argues that in order to effect social change people must engage in a threefold process which includes: (1) recognizing the constitutive power of discourses; (2) catching discourse in act of shaping desires and perception; and (3) engagement in collective processes of re-writing and re-positioning (Davies 1993).

In this tradition of thought, agency is understood to involve resistance, and change is achieved via an alertness to the shaping nature of the discourses and a connection to certain ‘conditions of possibility’ (Davies et al. 2001). Butler (2004) discusses the role that ‘possibility’ plays in the business of change. She argues that the imagined and the imaginary play a central role in enabling learning and change in the self. She describes fantasy as

the art of the articulation of the possible; it moves us beyond what is merely actual and present into a realm of possibility, the not yet actualized or the not actualizable. . . . Fantasy is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise; it establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points elsewhere, and when it is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home. (Butler 2004, pp. 28–29)

Much of the work of poststructural philosophy and sociology has been to develop theories to help people understand how or why things happen the way they do. However, less attention has been given to the pedagogical implications of these theories for those engaging explicitly in the business of social change. Yet if identity is held to be fluid, as it is in the poststructural tradition of thought, and if people are understood to be in a constant state of becoming, then change is presumed to be possible.

From Theory to Pedagogical Practice

How does one use poststructural theory when designing or appraising a learning strategy or a curriculum intervention? Within the academy, critical attention to discourse takes place through engagement with language or written texts. However in this chapter I will discuss the ways in which embodied pedagogies can be used to facilitate engagement with the shaping nature of social norms in school and community settings where people are less literate and not able to deal with high theory. I use examples drawn from work that I have conducted within gender rights and sexuality education programs, conducted in Bangladesh and Vietnam, working as a visiting consultant from my home country Australia.

My interest is in making the key concepts from poststructural theory available, visible and useable so as people outside the academy can use the associated insights in the business of change.

De-Centering Voice, Re-Calibrating Bodies

Elizabeth St. Pierre has addressed a similar challenge in relation to research writing. She argues that despite the extensive discussion in the academy about use of poststructural theory to inform analysis of research, there remains an over-reliance on traditional humanist methods such as the interview and the focus group to elicit data, and there is yet little innovative in research methods to gather and analyse data (St Pierre 2008). She points to the tendency for the humanist tradition of ‘voice’ in qualitative research to remain unquestioned despite the use of poststructuralist theory as the introductory frame.

Voice is especially troublesome for those who are wary of the supposed conscious, stable, unified, rational, coherent, knowing, autonomous, and ahistoric humanist individual (p. 319)

She finds that qualitative researchers who have supposedly taken the post-structuralist turn still use ‘voices’ as ‘centre pieces’ in their research writing pointing out that: “we have burdened the voices of our participants with too much evidentiary weight.” (p. 319).

In response to this challenge of de-centering voice, Elizabeth St. Pierre turns to Deleuzian poststructural theory to inform her efforts to avoid a summative and reductive fixity when writing about the complex lives of her research subjects (St. Pierre 2004). She uses Deleuze and Guattari’s construct of ‘deterritorialisation’ to argue the need for the creation of new spaces for analysis. She calls on their metaphor of the ‘nomad’ to conjure the image of a researcher who can work across the boundaries of defining storylines (St. Pierre 1997a). In Deleuzian theory, a nomad is one who occupies many different spaces and territories. The nomad is always on the move, travelling along tracks and between points, but also across boundaries. When St. Pierre uses this metaphor in her research writing, she defines a nomadic thinking space as a one which permits thinking across boundaries. My interest as an educator is in how to construct such ‘nomad’ spaces’ within the workshop, spaces wherein voice can be de-centered and bodies re-calibrated so as to permit the construction of alternative knowledge about the self and how it is shaped. Space in this sense being both material, as in a place wherein the bodies can interact, and metaphysical, as in a space within which different sharings, dreamings and analysis can occur.

Where St. Pierre focuses on the use of figurations to structure genre shifts within research writing, I have explored the use of various dramatic conventions to help players to use the human figure as the tool through which to detect, display, deconstruct and disrupt dominant stories. In the following section I discuss the way

in which different conventions work to invite various ways to embody and know the self, and to construct alternative thinking spaces within which to engage in the work of critical enquiry.

Field Stories

The first example is drawn from a training workshop I conducted in Bangladesh. The focus of the workshop was to introduce various trainers and program managers to the *Creating Connections: Gender rights, sexuality education and HIV Prevention program* which would take the form of a community education program designed in different iterations for use in clubs for women, girls, men and boys. The program was funded by UNICEF and conducted in partnership with the Bangladesh Government Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) under their *Enabling Environment for Child Rights (AECR)* program. The densely populated the People's Republic of Bangladesh is the world's eighth-most populous country. The majority (89 %) follow the Islamic religion. Around one-quarter of the population lives below the country-based poverty line defined as less than \$2US per day. Bangladesh has a particularly high rate of child marriage with 65 % of girls married before the age of 18 years, and 29 % married before the age of 15, despite that 18 is the legal age for marriage for girls.¹

The case story provided here is drawn from the experience of conducting an initial training of trainers workshop designed to familiarise local facilitators with the program and to equip them to use the participatory methods that are central to its design. The 35 participants were roughly two-thirds female, one-third male.

Using the Image for Analysis

Early in the workshop my intention was to open discussion of gender roles. I used the simple performance convention of the symbolic image as the mode through which to articulate their perceptions of gender positions and norms in Bangladeshi society. I invited the participants to work in small groups to devise and display an embodied still image depicting the position of the adolescent girl (or that of the adolescent boy or the young transgender person) in their society. I suggested that they might like to use either a 'photographic' style, to represent a characteristic image from reality, or a 'sculpture' in which as 'artists' they conjured or commented on reality without necessarily representing its physical semblance. After

¹Statistics retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bangladesh_bangladesh_statistics.html.

presenting their images, observers from the other groups would 'read' their work, and then as creators, they would have the opportunity to describe their intent.

One of the groups fashioned their image to show the position of the Bangladeshi adolescent girl. They had bound the feet of this girl, gagged her mouth, and tied her hands in front of her. She stood as the central figure restrained by a further four figures who held her shoulders and head. The spectators read this image of the bound, surrounded and constrained girl as symbolic of the contained life of the adolescent girl whose every move is watched and controlled lest she bring shame on herself or her family. The artists explained that they intended to show the way that the adolescent girl is held in her place by both males and females, who represent her parents and grandparents. The binding of the ankles was to represent her lack of freedom to move anywhere in the public space without permission. Her mouth was gagged because she is given no voice in the family, and her hands were tied because there is little she can do in the matter of her own liberation.

In Bangladesh, strict gender 'rules' are part of the daily experience of young women. Within this tradition, young women are subjected to strict scrutiny, and 'deviations' can bring social, cultural, moral and financial consequences for the girl and her family members (Rashid and Michaud 2000). A girl who does not obey these gendered social rules may find that damage to her reputation makes her unmarriageable or only marriageable to someone of poorer circumstances (Davis 2009).

In contrast, using a more photographic style, another group depicted the position of the adolescent boy. He was shown carrying books and a satchel, and using a mobile phone as he strode away from the 'home' scene in which various back-grounded females scrubbed the floor, and served food to a comfortably seated father figure. The artists described the young man's freedom to travel through the public space without harassment, his privileged access to school, and his priority access to the new technologies that put him in communication with peers and provided him a portal to the global as well as the local environment. The girl in the background however was practicing her future role, via her present servitude to the father. Her longing gaze, directed to her brother, represented her wish that she too could have his opportunities for learning and freedom of movement.

As the embodied images were shown around the room, there was a cumulative exposition of a pattern of gendered relations. In working across the collection of images it became evident that this pattern was bigger than the individuals who enact and perpetuate it. They were both makers of and made by the gender 'machine', a machine that not only produces certain progeny, but also the desire amongst its progeny to reproduce the machine.

Future Frames

In a second circuit of the room, the groups re-played their first image, but this time they were asked to follow it with a second image—this one representing their

preferred future for the position of their adolescent. With our first group the girl remained central, but was shown stepping forward, with arms flung wide, signaling a release from the grip of those who had held her back. The guardian figures no longer contained, but rather supported her movement forward. In our second group the boy now shared his outward path, and his books, with his sister, and the father shared the domestic chores with the mother.

Through these simple images, participants constructed their vision of a preferred future. At first the shift seemed to be a simple inverse of the originals. However upon a closer look it could be seen that as well as identifying what should be changed, many of these images also carried information about what should be preserved in a preferred future. Both of the future images preserved the strength and centrality of family in the lives of adolescents, albeit a family within which the power relations had been adjusted to provide a more equitable positioning for male and females.

Embodied Exegesis

As the participants conducted their exegesis of the embodied texts, they analysed the present conditions of their world. In reading the embodied images they described the way gender norms work across and through the generations, re-weaving themselves into the lives of the young. When they constructed their preferred future frames, they articulated their own and encountered each others' yearning for a corrective social shift. The future frames brought the ideal into the room as an embodied possibility contained within a simple exemplar. Potentially the embodied nature of this image helps construct some 'evidence' that it could be performed. If the boundary of what is possible lives within our imaginations, it becomes part of the discourse when it is shared in the collective enactment.

Butler argues that the image or idea that we have of the world operates as a frame, demarking that which can be seen, known or recognized to be possible.

...our idea of the world - that is, the idea of what can be narrated or shown or framed as the world - is a way of regulating affect and has a direct bearing on what we take the world to be, and the kinds of political judgments we can make about it. (Butler 2007).

Potentially the embodiment of the preferred future has a contribution to make in relation to stretching the frame through which the world can be seen. It tugs the boundary apart from the norm, within which replication is both anticipated and acceptable, and it stretches it to permit a glimpse of the ideal, and to permit a yearning for it. This is a shift in affect, as within yearning there is an energy that may orient action, whereas within acceptance there is no such affective energy for change.

As the participants speak about their worlds they are engaged in embodied action which in itself generates an affective response. Butler notes that a speech act is also a bodily act. It is something that a body does, influencing both speaker and listener.

So “I” tell a story to “you,” and we might together consider the details of the story that I tell. But if I tell them to you in the context of a transference (and can there be telling without transference?), I am doing something with this telling, acting on you in some way. And this telling is also doing something to me, acting on me, in ways that I may well not understand as I go. (Butler 2005 p. 51)

By this theory, the telling of one’s vision of the future is an embodied exchange, in which the parties act upon each other, and in doing so, act also upon themselves. By extension, when people collectively improvise a dramatised story, they too are engaged in bodily acts that occur both within the exchange between the players in the scene, and between players and observers. Although it may appear that the observers are just sitting, listening and watching, even the attending of observers is a form of doing. Their attending helps to shape the structure of address as an inherently performative and social act.

The Silencing Norm and the Scene of Address

Whilst the still images were useful in beginning a conversation about gender norms, there are other performance conventions that I have found to be more useful in helping participants to catch the norms in the act of shaping their own behavior. It can be easy to presume a separateness from this shaping nature when one is accounting for the phenomenon.

The following example I draw from my experience in leading an exploratory workshop with 30 members of The Vietnam Women’s Union (VWU), a mass organisation of 14 million members, with well-established networks that reach to commune level in all communities. We were engaged in an initial needs analysis workshop commissioned by the VWY to inform *The Creating Connections Gender rights, sexuality education and HIV Prevention program*, which was to take the form of a year-long monthly curriculum for women’s clubs and girls clubs aiming to assist them to talk about sex with friends, family and partners.

Vietnam is a communist country, undergoing rapid economic growth, and a decline in the proportion of people living in poverty. In 2014 it was the world’s 13th most populous country. It has achieved literacy rates over 90 %. However, gender inequality and social norms in the Confucian tradition of Vietnam require woman to be trusting, unquestioning or self-sacrificial. The cultural mores of Vietnam mean that women can find it difficult to ask their partners to modify their sexual behaviour and use condoms.

Mid-way through the workshop the women were simultaneously at work in pairs. One role-plays the mother and the other her daughter about to depart for university studies in a distant city (for a more detailed account of this workshop see Cahill 2010). Those playing the Mothers had been given the task of talking to those playing the 18-year old Daughters about the possibility of sex and the role of

condoms in protecting against sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. The Mothers had been given a condom packet to use as a prop in the scene.

As I observed the embodied encounters between mothers and daughters, I could see that they played shy and softly spoken mothers. The bodies and voices were contained, and restrained. As players, they seemed delicately and painfully poised in an impossible traverse between playing good woman (who in the tradition of Vietnam must neither know much nor talk openly about sex) and good mother (who in this instance they had decided must be able to teach her daughter how to keep herself safe around men given that she was about to join a ‘new’ and wider world).

When the scenes were played back (I listened to the text through interpreters) I found that the mothers skirted the subject, making elliptical approaches to the topic. Afterwards most of them acknowledged that they did not get the job done. They did not manage to talk to their daughters about the risks of unprotected sex, or to describe the role of the condom in protecting against pregnancy and STI’s. They explained that they found it too hard to speak the needed words, and even harder to bring this object (the condom packet) into the scene. After the exercise they commiserated with each other. They tried to articulate what it is that the mother *could* say, *should* say. *We have the knowledge, but still we cannot speak it*, they tell me through the interpreter. *In our tradition, it is not appropriate for women to talk about sex.*

Their role-plays were only a fiction, but they were a fiction in which the players constructed a replication of what they believed to be their ‘reality’. As a pedagogical strategy the role-plays had shown the grip that ‘tradition’ can have on everyday talk. *I seek to play or say myself this way—but I cannot.* It seemed that the players had encountered a performativity impasse.

I find Butler’s discussion of the ethical and social nature of the ‘scene of address’ to be instructive in explaining the performative impasse here (Butler 2005).

Butler describes the inherently social nature of the self and the way in which the ‘scene of address’ influences that which can be said or understood. Our speaking is not only to another, but created out of the language and social norms and storylines that precede and surround us.

An account of oneself is always given to another, whether conjured or existing, and this other establishes the scene of address as a more primary ethical relation than a reflexive effort to give an account of oneself. Moreover, the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making. They are social in character, and they establish social norms, a domain of unfreedom and substitutability within which our “singular” stories are told. (Butler 2005) p. 21)

Within the naturalistic frame of this scenario, the scene of address limits what can be said to that which is understood to be appropriate within the mutuality of the mother-daughter relational act. The mother and daughter characters exist within an interlocking set of positions which work to maintain the silence around sex.

Turning the Self Inside-Out

Potentially the mother-daughter scenes have worked to contain or even to heighten the dominant story—that women can't speak with ease about sex, and to transmit the meta-story that shame is indivisible from sex.

The attempt to interrupt the norm within the scene has been useful in revealing that there is a normative grip on the performance of the self. The selection of performance genre itself may have had a role in this process of replication. This is because within the naturalistic tradition, players must construct believable scenes. Indeed, believability is a quality indicator within the naturalistic genre.

However, this bumping into boundaries is not the same as an articulation of the discourses themselves. Can they be enacted? How could we recognize them, embody them, shrouded as they are in their invisible cloaks?

To work on this, I ask some observers to become the 'Hidden Thoughts' of the characters. Additional players step into the scene, standing behind the original characters. I question them about what the characters may have been thinking or feeling but not saying aloud in the scene, about what they might be hoping for, or afraid of. I seek multiple answers to each of the questions.

The mother's hidden thoughts unravel thus:

She thinks - keep daughter innocent is keep her from desire ... teach the facts will keep her safe ... she feels shame to be mother who cannot speak. She wishes for the past when things were known.... she feels angry at the way of the past. She feels hope for her daughter to have freedom unknown. She feels fear at what the other mothers will think ...

The Hidden Thoughts convention invited a different embodiment of the self from the players. They appeared relaxed, as they stood next to the originals. Their bodies do not seem to yearn to disappear from the scene of address as those in the naturalistic version of the scenario had done. Rather, they lean into the space. They fish up ideas and theories. They weave them into an alternative mat of knowledge. The co-construction has an intimacy to it, with observers volunteering additional answers. The collective group seems to engage in an aesthetics of appreciation—of connoisseurship—as they savour the revelation of that which is normally 'hidden'.

Metaphors for the Metaphysical

This dramatic convention works somewhat like the metaphor of the fold, as described by Elizabeth St. Pierre. She notes that the pleat, or the fold is a metaphor which can be used to help us honor the complexity of the human subject (St. Pierre 1997b). In a garment, the pleat is a shape where outside and inside are part of the one fabric. Within this metaphor, outside and inside need not be seen as binary opposites, but rather as co-existing planes. This figuration is useful because due to our familiarity with the 'fold' we can readily picture how something can be both external and internal. We can further imagine that with a simple re-folding of the

cloth, we can accomplish a reverse through which the internal can become the external. Thus the 'fold' is a figuration which can help us to straddle the defining binaries that exist in language, such as those pertaining to mind/body, internal/external, self/other/and fiction/reality. In similar fashion, the Hidden Thoughts convention permits players to straddle the mind/body binary and me/you, or us/them divides through which we organize our thinking about the world.

The Hidden Thoughts game provides a chance for the participants to show that the characters are not only individuals, acting upon each other, but are also created by and living into the shared stories, desires, fears and norms of their world. The players articulate their knowledge of the discourses that govern their interactions within the original scene.

Through this process the women co-create and articulate their shared knowledge of the shaping nature of the culture they live within. In this, the Hidden Thoughts game provided greater potential for facilitating discourse detection than did the naturalistic role-play. The naturalistic role-play functioned to demonstrate the existence of constraints, via a replication of them, but the Hidden Thoughts device invited articulation of the storylines from which these norms were fashioned, and of the way in which they showed up in the form of affect, or in the forces that were felt through the body, and directed its actions.

It seems that this alter-ego convention has provided a more permissive space for the performance of the self. It is a space somewhat similar to that of the 'aside' in the theatre. Typically in the theatre, the space provided within the aside allows for a character to provide an alternative account of events, or to articulate the thoughts they are not permitted to express fully within the linear narrative. The presumption is that 'time' has been suspended whilst they speak. Thus, they are both within and outside of time. The player can be permitted to speak with a degree of freedom from the norms, constraints and assumptions that surround their character within the home-base narrative. In the theatre, the aside interrupts the '4th wall' of naturalism, so as the character can address the audience. Potentially this interruption can call attention to the constructed rather than the 'true' nature of the story.

St. Pierre uses the construct of the 'aside' as a figuration to support research writing noting that via use of this metaphor it is possible to imagine that one can dwell both within the boundary or striation and also be able to temporarily supersede it (St. Pierre 1997c). In this the 'aside' can provide a 'nomad' space because it can be wandered into and territorialized as the player addresses the audience, but then deterritorialized as the player returns to the main body of the action within the play (St. Pierre 1997c).

Surreal as Ruptured Reality

Yet another shift in the performance of the self is seen in response to the use of a surrealist performance convention. Use of a surrealist convention signals to both players and audience that the boundaries of reality can be stretched wide open.

At a later stage in the workshop with the Vietnam Women's Union, I ask six volunteers to play the part of Celebrity Condoms making a guest appearance in a TV chat show. The Chat Show Host will interview them about the problems they encounter, their contributions and triumphs, and the myths surrounding their use. I provide sparkly eye masks for the players to wear, presuming that this might help to signal both to them and to their observers that we are not working within a naturalistic frame.

The selected players each work with a group to prepare a possible response. Then they are called to the front of the room where furniture has been arranged to denote the space within which the TV chat show will take place. The remaining observers are assembled and re-positioned to take up the role of the studio audience. Once the play begins, a transformation is evident in the way that the women embody themselves. The 'Celebrity Condoms' strut and prance, adopting theatrical and sexualized poses. They compete for attention and brag about their prowess. Where earlier in the workshop the participants had found it awkward to say the word 'bao cao su' (condom) preferring instead to use the common brand name in Vietnam "OK", now they speak confidently about their prowess and performance in saving persons and nation from the affliction of HIV. The observers are delighted with what is apparently a transgressive text. (Their text is not well translated for me because the interpreter is overcome with laughter.) What I can see however is that with a shift in genre and role, the players have traversed the silencing norm and spun into a hilarious line of flight, towing the observers with them.

Why is it that these players could speak in such an uncontained manner in this scenario whilst so constrained in the initial naturalistic scene? Butler points attention to the 'structure of address' as well as the 'scene of address'. "If I give an account, and give it to you, then my narrative depends upon a structure of address." (2005, p. 53). Here the 'structure of address' can be understood as pertaining to the aesthetics of the enactment of the self and the articulation of the tale or text. If this embodied transformation is a response to a shift in the 'structure' of address, then it is likely that this is an effect of the shift in genre, and the associated aesthetic rules and standards of expression. This shift in genre or structure also influences the relational fabric of the scene of address. Within the surrealist genre of tale-telling, the rules about reality can be re-written. Anything that is imaginable is possible. Perhaps when one plays oneself as a condom, one experiences a greater liberation from the constraints around the embodiment and articulation of gendered roles. Further, in playing themselves as 'celebrities', there is a presumption that they will enjoy performing for their audience (the game-show audience) and will be able to exhibit a flamboyant style within their performance repertoire. This doubled set of permissions (I am a celebrity, I am a condom)—together with the scene of address established via the performance genre (this is a surrealist scene) gives a set of permissions or even expectations for a particular type of performance of the self.

Becoming Clown

Six months later I witness a further unexpected transformation in the embodiment of the self, again escalated by positioning bodies within a surrealist frame. The Vietnamese trainers had re-assembled for a booster workshop. During this workshop the players were asked to prepare for a re-enactment of the Celebrity Condoms exercise, so as we could discuss how they might facilitate it in their community groups. To provide some variety, rather than supply masks, as in the earlier workshop, I asked each group to fashion a costume for the representative who would play the part of the Celebrity Condom. Participants were invited to use any of the materials available in the workshop space but given no direction.

Here I saw a very different embodiments of self. One group blew up balloons to represent breasts, fixing them to a paper dress fashioned from the flip charts. These balloons were used to not only represent breasts, but exposed breasts, pinned as they were to the outside of the garment. There may have been some permissive contagion of ideas across the room, as within a short while I noticed that another group were at work to costume their character to represent a male. They had fixed an inflated condom as an erect penis to the exterior of 'his' paper costume, along with two partially inflated balloons representing the testicles. These inflated organs bounced around the front of the body in their own ridiculous dance. Other groups adorned their players with condom packets used as earrings and brooches, or paper dresses emblazoned with the condom brand names ("OK" and "Hello") on their garments. Thus in their costuming efforts, each group commandeered the 'hidden' objects, transmogrifying them into apparel or organs, in this crossing the boundaries of person-prophylactic, and hidden-seen. The condoms that had been so hard to introduce into the conversation in the earlier mother-daughter scenes became here subsumed into their larger performed identities.

Arguably the players were permitted or protected in this transgression via their spontaneous adoption of a form of clowning, as well as the knowledge that they were about to perform within the boundary of the surreal. It seemed that this time they deliberately sought the transgression of humour. Clowning is a performance convention that not only permits irreverence but also uses a heightened and distorted physicality as part of enacting this irreverence. Becoming 'clown', is a doing of the self that temporarily dislodges certain binding norms about what can be done with the body, done by the body, and done in front of or to other bodies. Becoming clown also signals that the scene of address between performer and audience has shifted. Within this scene of address it is expected that the encounter be a transgression, rather than a confession, and that the exchange be one of shared delight, rather than one of compassion or introspection. As clowns they are permitted for a moment to become ungovernable subjects whose role is to expose the unwritten rules and norms just so as they can be caught breaking them. This is like a reversed position to the confession (in which one names one's wrong-doing). In the clowning transgression one must enact the wrong doing, and ideally, be caught or seen in this act.

From Recognition to Re-Cognition

Can these various types of embodied engagement with the subject matter of gender and sexual health play a part in enabling change? Butler argues that “that new norms are brought into being when unanticipated forms of recognition take place.” (Butler 2007, p. 31). I take this to mean that when there is a ‘rupture’ in our recognition, or when the familiar is disturbed, uprooted, or contradicted, we can come to see or understand someone or something differently. Recognition can also occur when something enables us to see something that had previously been out of sight—possibly ‘present’ but merely invisible because outside the radar of our attending. If this is so, the business of change must involve both rupture and re-cognition, leading to a new form of recognition. It seemed to me that the women had encountered different expositions and enactments of who they ‘are’ and could be, as the work ranged from the naturalistic, to the alter-ego, to the surrealist and the clowning play.

Here I have set out to consider the contribution that embodied dramatized play can make to an education program that seeks to embrace a poststructuralist understanding of identity construction. I find that there are many modes of play that can prompt engagement in deconstruction and detection of the shaping discourse, and others that help to prompt the creation of a possibility that things can be differently.

The examples discussed here have demonstrated that the ‘scene of address’ within the performance genre influences the construction of knowledge that occurs and the types of recognition that take place. Different performance conventions lend themselves to different types of recognition, because they invite a different performance of the self. As an educator I see the following functions:

- **Changing the norms within the constraints of naturalism:** Attempts to play against the grain within the naturalistic scenarios helped expose the grip of the norm. When players set out to play themselves differently within the frame of a naturalistic scene, they encountered the presence of internalised boundaries constraining their freedom to act. *We struggle in a soup of yearning, fear and shame. We cling to the rightness and righteousness of our own position even as we seek to play ourselves differently. Our oppressor lives within.*
- **Constructing embodied images to represent gendered positions:** The construction of ‘analytic images’ assisted the players to elucidate the patterned and patterning nature of social norms. Their embodied images illustrated the various governing practices of segregation and control. *We embody the image of the norm, and as we read across the collection of images, we see that the patterns and positions pre-exist the individuals who inhabit and play out these positions.*
- **Designing images of the preferred future:** When constructing ‘future frames’ in counterpoint to the diagnostic images, participants embodied their shared expressions of yearning. This helped them to articulate a preferred possibility. Because the image of the preferred future did not have to be fashioned as an arrival final phase emerging out of the present circumstances, it did not have to

be imagined as the effect of a particular set of causes. Rather it was framed within its own space as something to invent, behold and to play towards. *We make a new future, and float it like a balloon on a string, tethered to the present by the line of our imagination.*

- **Using the Hidden Thoughts convention to articulate the unspoken:** The ‘hidden thoughts’ convention engaged players in an embodied form of discourse detection. When the observers stepped into the scene to articulate what it is that the characters might have been thinking or feeling but not saying aloud, they named the deeper emotions, fears, desires and hopes that coexisted within the characters. The inner script became also the outer script, and thus recognized to be part of the one ‘fabric’. The poly-vocal nature of this convention helped to disrupt the notion of a singular voice or truth. This permitted the players to locate multiple and even seemingly inconsistent hopes, fears, desires, beliefs, and emotions. In this, they articulated the shared and shaping nature of these discourses. *We confess and savour our strengths and weaknesses, our meanness and our glory, our hopes and desires and fears. We come to see that they are a sea we swim within, a sea of unfathomable depth, which is always in movement.*
- **Playing within the surreal:** When playing as condoms within a surrealist scene, and when adorned with outlandish costumes that further marked them out as ‘clowns’, the players could transgress certain social and gender norms without penalty. They were positioned to speak as political commentators or social analysts. *We occupy a different world in which things have become strange. We become clowns. We transgress the rules we fear to break when unprotected by this role. We laugh at the rigidity of our lot. We see the way the system shapes the players and we laugh at the very machinery that produces our lives. Our laughter shakes the foundation of knowledge.*

Conclusion

In this chapter I have used examples from work conducted within gender rights and sexuality education programs in Bangladesh and Vietnam to discuss ways in which poststructuralist theory can be used to inform a pedagogy for change. These examples demonstrate that a pedagogical engagement with deconstruction need not be highbrow or extant in theoretical discourse. Rather, critically reflective work can be made immediate and accessible when approached through embodied and collective dramatized play.

I have built on the work of Deleuzian researcher Elizabeth St. Pierre, relating the way she uses figurations to manage the expression of complexity in research writing to the use of anti-naturalistic conventions in dramatic play. I have used Butler’s concept of the ‘scene of address’ and the ‘structure of address’ to discuss why it might be that certain dramatic conventions more readily invite replication of dominant storylines and subject positions, whilst others provide greater permission and stimulus for critical enquiry and for the creation of new possibilities.

I have demonstrated ways in which an embodied engagement with the story and storying can make accessible a type of discourse detection. Various performance conventions can be harnessed to create 'nomad' or deterritorialised spaces within which to do and recognize the self differently. The surrealist genre invited parody, clowning and associated transgressions in body and text. The alter-ego convention of the Hidden Thoughts facilitated a crossing of the divides between mind and body, logos and affect, and between individual and collective modes of understanding the subject.

The various exercises discussed enabled the participants to create and embody different types of 'knowledge' about the self and to articulate a collection of poly-vocal and multi-stranded tales about the 'not-us' that is also 'us'. This process of deconstruction facilitated engagement in re-construction. The suspension of certainty provided a space for enquiry. The enquiry produced the possibility of re-cognition and new forms of recognition, which may in themselves accelerate the possibility of change.

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Visual Ethics with and Through the Body: The Participation of Girls with Disabilities in Vietnam in a Photovoice Project

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... we recognized that a variety of tools alone is not sufficient to enable participation, and that successful participation is contingent on researchers questioning their methods, and that this is a continually reflexive process.

(Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2012, p. 225)

Abstract This chapter comes out of a two year study in Vietnam with a group of girls with disabilities. It focuses on the ways in which the use of the well-known visual tool of photovoice in a project where issues of embodiment are already critical, can contribute to re-framing the idea of a body politic in participatory visual research. For example, how can work with girls with disabilities inform such typical ethical issues in visual research as ‘a no faces approach’ in the context of anonymity? Why no ‘faces’ (vs no hands or no feet) and where does the anonymity of the body reside? At the same time, what are the ethical dimensions of the use of the visual in a study associated with a population that has typically been ‘hidden from view’? What are the rights of the ‘learning bodies’ of the girls with disabilities to be seen and heard? In drawing on work in the area of Critical Disability Studies, Girlhood Studies and Participatory Visual Research, the chapter has key implications for research ethics boards and raises critical issues of human rights. Critically it asks the question: what is the place of our own researcher reflexivity in relation to ‘learning bodies’, advocacy and research ethics?

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Introduction

In this chapter we explore the idea of “visual ethics in and through the body” in a photovoice project with girls with disabilities in Vietnam. The chapter is divided into four main sections. In this section, we contextualize the study itself, highlighting first the ways in which girls with disabilities have been typically excluded from the global, national, educational and academic communities which claim to be inclusive, and indeed, how people with disabilities more generally are excluded when it comes to visual representation. Section “[The Context of Working With Girls With Disabilities](#)” provides both the conceptual and methodological framework for the chapter, based on fieldwork carried out in Hanoi, Vietnam with girls with disabilities. We then go on to discuss the “learning bodies” data in section “[Photovoice as a Tool of Representation and Embodiment](#)”. Here we develop the idea of embodied research (Barbour 2004), and the ways in which performing the body through staging and playfulness featured in the fieldwork. We then consider the ethical ‘learnings’ arising from our work with girls with disabilities. In the section “[Learning Bodies: The Data](#)” we explore the possibilities of a learning bodies framework in relation to visual ethics. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the contribution of this work to the field of visual ethics.

The Context of Working with Girls with Disabilities

Global Context

The fieldwork explored in the chapter is based on a two-year study with girls with disabilities in Vietnam: *Monitoring the Rights of Girls with Disabilities* (MRDG). This study involved researchers from both the Global North and Global South, along with community partners in Vietnam. Central to the goals of the study, and building on our previous participatory visual work with children and young people, we were interested in testing out the use of participatory visual methodologies with girls in relation to what they had to say about their own participation in education, and the ways that they felt included or excluded. As we have explored elsewhere (Nguyen and Mitchell 2012), governments around the world have been attempting to address gender inequality, and have also called for inclusive education for children with disabilities in the global context of education. See for example the global frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO 1994), Education for All (UNESCO 2005a, b, 2009), the United Nations’ thematic discussion on violence against girls and women with disabilities (United Nations 2012), and more recently the Sustainable Development Goals (2012). To date however, girls with disabilities have been largely excluded from

these global initiatives, despite the recognition that girls with disabilities are at greater risk when it comes to gender violence and sexual exploitation (United Nations 2012).

Vietnamese Context

The situation for girls with disabilities in Vietnam is grave, despite the increasing recognition of disability rights in Vietnam. Although disability citizenship has been redefined in the law in Vietnam, the absence of explicit references to girls with disabilities in policies, and the lack of social programmes for disabled children continues to perpetuate what might be regarded as a gender hierarchy. Treated as abnormal and inferior to able-bodied people, girls with disabilities are often presented through ableist ideology: they are a shame for their family, a burden on the economy, and impeding national development (Nguyen and Mitchell 2014). Various institutional situations have put girls with disabilities at greater risk in relation to domestic and disability-related violence (Ortoleva and Lewis 2012). Marginalization, gender-based violence, lack of access to education, and unequal treatments in schools have been some of the most common forms of exclusion for girls with disabilities globally and locally (UNICEF 2013). The absence of services and specific policies linked to providing care to girls with disabilities in Vietnam draws attention to the need to deepen an understanding of human rights for “girls with disabilities” in and outside of school.

Being Seen and the Body Politic

It is not just the absence of services and specific policies for people with disabilities that is of concern, but also ‘the presence of absence’ of people with disabilities more generally within visual representation. As Hevey (2006) writes in his essay ‘The enfreakment of photography’ in which he attempted to study visual representations of people with disability in key photography collections (*The Family of Man*, *Diane Arbus*, *Another Way of Telling*, and *Figments of the Real World*), there are very few images of people with disabilities. The one collection that does feature such images is that of Diane Arbus, who has been highly criticized for her photographic representations of people that she saw as freaks. Hevey (1992) draws our attention to Bodsworth’s biography of Diane Arbus in which she tells the story of Arbus’ being “‘extremely upset’ when she received a reply from ‘The Little People’s Convention’ to her request to photograph them. They wrote that ‘we have our own little person to photograph us’”. Disabled people are usually absent from the photographic genre, and as noted above, when they are pictured in photographic representations, they appear as symbols of enfreakment. The role of the disabled body is to fulfil the grand narratives of the (able-bodied) photographers, and not for

themselves. By contrast, we explore here the use of photovoice as a tool for knowledge production, giving girls with disabilities cameras so as to empower them to collectively represent their own voices, bodies and stories (Booth and Booth 2003, see also Nguyen 2015).

Photovoice as a Tool of Representation and Embodiment

We argue that photovoice, as described by Wang (1999), who coined the term, is deeply rooted in feminist traditions, particularly in relation to women's bodies and women's health. As such it is highly appropriate to use this method when working with girls with disabilities. In particular we draw on the words of Joan Solomon in her introduction to *What can a woman do with a camera* (Spence and Solomon 1995) and the significance of girls and women having agency over representations of how they are seen. As Solomon comments:

How can we as women [girls] tell stories that eradicate the disparity between how we are seen and what we feel? How do we present who we really are in terms of images? And why does it matter that we do? To answer this we need to understand the very fundamental that the representation of people helps to determine who they become. (cited in Wang 1999, p. 187).

In the tradition of feminist research, use of photovoice as a research tool privileges the voices of those most marginalized (typically girls and women), and serves as a tool for self-representation and reflexivity. When used in areas such as women's health, this method has the potential to challenge dominant views of how girls and women are seen.

About Photovoice as Methodology

The participatory visual methodology of photovoice involves giving simple point and shoot digital cameras to participants to 'voice' visually that which is often difficult to put into words. As such, photovoice is a tool to see 'through the eyes' of those who are often the most marginalized in the research process (Wang and Burris 1997). The method gives participants opportunities to (1) document and record experiences and conditions around them; (2) critically reflect on the issues; and (3) develop strategies to reach policy-makers. While photovoice has been used with many different populations, it has played a particularly important role in work with marginalized groups of children and young people (See also Delgado 2015). In our own work over the last decade this has included working with children in many different settings, ranging from children living in informal settlements in sub-Saharan Africa (Mitchell et al. 2006; Chege et al. 2014) to rural youth in South

Africa in relation to addressing stigma and HIV and AIDS (Moletsane et al. 2007). As we have found in this work, the strength of such an approach lies not simply in researchers analysing the pictures produced by the participants, but rather in the engagement with the participants themselves both in relation to narrating their own stories behind the photos; and having participants analyse/interpret their own visual productions, and fashion resulting exhibitions.

The process of conducting a group photovoice session, as we have documented in the various publications noted above, involves a number of steps. While there is some flexibility around these steps, they typically include at a minimum the following: (1) a lead in time to contextualise the work; (2) participants learning about photographs; (3) engaging with the prompt (or what they are going to be focusing on in their photographs); (4) learning how to operate the cameras; (5) visual ethics (including the ‘no faces protocol’) of what to take pictures of besides or instead of faces; (6) taking the pictures; (7) looking at the pictures; (8) small groups working with the photos, reflecting on the ideas, and creating captions to go with the photos; (9) small groups presenting their analysis to the larger group; and (10) planning and preparing for disseminating the work through exhibitions to community members and policy makers.

Photovoice Work with Girls with Disabilities in Hanoi

Both the global and national context for girls with disabilities serve as the backdrop for testing out participatory visual methodologies with girls in Vietnam in relation to how they see themselves as included or excluded in educational and community settings. Critically, we offer our own positioning in terms of embarking upon the fieldwork variously as insiders to the Vietnam context (in the case of Thuy) and as outsiders (Claudia and Naydene). The fieldwork we report on here, conducted early in 2014, involved girls with disabilities from Tu Liem, an area just outside Hanoi. We also worked with a local Vietnamese partner, the Action to Community Development Center (ACDC) and a Disabled People’s Organization (DPO), led by women with disabilities. In order to conduct the fieldwork session in 2014, we invited eight women with disabilities from ACDC in Tu Liem, along with two women with disabilities attached to ACDC, to be co-facilitators of participatory visual workshops with the participating girls, and as part of this initiative, we provided training on participatory visual methodologies prior to working with the girls. This training forms an essential part of our politics of engagement with the local knowledge. It also serves as a key process of empowering disabled women through monitoring work (Nguyen et al. 2015).

Conducted under the umbrella of funded research awarded through two Canadian universities, the fieldwork received ethical clearance from both York University and Mount Saint Vincent University. The participation of the girls and young women with intellectual, mobility, and other physical impairments, such as sight and hearing impairments, reflects the inclusive ethos of this project. In total

we involved 22 girls and young women, ranging in age between 11 and 25, in participatory visual workshops (using drawing and photovoice). The activities over several days included: day 1 (drawing); day 2 (photovoice); and day 3 (a community outreach session involving the girls themselves). Facilitators and representatives from various stakeholder and policy makers attended a half-day session where they had an opportunity to view an exhibition made up of photos and drawings.

The actual prompt around which the photovoice activity was organized was “Feeling included and excluded in school”. In carrying out the photovoice work, we made several adaptations to the generic method. First, although the girls worked in small groups, they also always had an adult facilitator with them to assist with planning, picture taking and follow-up activities. Second, as an additional participatory visual activity, the girls combined photovoice and art-making to create ‘policy posters’, a term we coined to describe the activity of producing a message for policy makers and other community leaders. Following a session on the idea of making policy recommendations coming out of the photovoice exhibition, each small group brainstormed what they thought would be the most urgent message (image and slogan) to express to policy makers. They considered which photo image would be most relevant (either one that they had already produced earlier in the photovoice project, or a new one). The final stage of poster production was to represent the slogan and image artfully on poster paper. Each small group presented their policy poster to the whole group. We saw this step as being a crucial one for ensuring that the girls had a chance to distil their ideas into messages that they held to be critical and urgent.

Learning Bodies: The Data

The photovoice work enabled the girls to represent their experiences of feeling included and not included in school. As we explore elsewhere (Nguyen et al. 2015), a number of key issues emerged in the 100 photo images produced, including reference to accessibility in schools and public spaces; the importance of friendship, connectivity, and solidarity with peers; along with the importance of participation in educational activities. There were also photographs of feeling not included, with various images representing experiences of classroom inaccessibility, being expelled from schools, bullying, and gender-based violence in schools. When the girls had the opportunity to come up with key messages, they offered such messages as “Listen to what disabled people say”, “Please care about us”, “We go to school together” and “Please be our friend”. Beyond these explicit word-driven messages, we focus here on visually-driven messages and the idea of embodiment, ‘performing the body’, and ethics in and through the body as a way to talk about ‘learning bodies’.

Part 1: Performing the Body

We locate the idea of photovoice and embodiment in work in the area of arts-based research and the body (See for example Barbour 2004; Jipson and Paley 1997). In our early work with photovoice, involving teachers participating in a photovoice project in South Africa focusing on HIV and AIDS, we saw how their photographic representations of the body provided a natural site to deepen an understanding of experiences of living with HIV or AIDS. As we describe the project in ‘Seeing with the body, teachers representations of HIV/AIDS (De Lange et al. 2006), the actual prompt for taking photographs asked participants to focus on the body as a way to represent feelings and ideas evoked by AIDS. The resulting visual narratives which we now see as an example of ‘performing the body’ enabled the exploration of patterns of understanding HIV and AIDS as both a social and embodied reality. Importantly, however, the participants spoke about being challenged “to take action, to take a position through creating their images of HIV and AIDS using the body” (p. 49). Many of the images produced in that project, and used by the teachers to create poster narratives, literally positioned the body—the sick body, the rejected body and so on—through staged enactments. Indeed, while the photos produced in the photovoice projects in which we have been involved have included documentary style images depicting specific issues in realistic ways, along with abstract and symbolic images, we have observed a use of staging, role-plays and re-enactments to represent concerns. As described by Mitchell (2011a, b), many of the resulting images and captions create a context that is both real *and* fictional, or *storied* in a way that positions the story-maker in the third person. Speaking, for example, of a provocative image of a staged (fictional) hanging produced by a group of ninth grade boys addressing stigma, the boys write: “He can’t accept that he is HIV positive. He feels he has to commit suicide because he would not like to tell people that he has AIDS”. We have wondered whether the creation of staged images may in part be a result of the fact that photovoice projects with children and young people are often carried out in institutional settings such as schools or community centres (and as such removed from other real-life settings). This is also something that characterized our fieldwork with the girls in Vietnam, which took place at a local hotel and not in their own communities. Doyon (2010) makes this same observation about the backdrop for the various videos created by his secondary schools students.

Staging, however, is something that Jo Spence experimented with outside of institutional settings in her collaborations (Martin and Spence 1988) in relation to body and identity (for example the schoolgirl body, the disfigured body). Spence’s staging work in relation to breast cancer allowed her to draw attention to the politics of environmental issues and women’s bodies and access to health care. Staging is also a feature of many of the photo projects carried out with children in the Appalachians of the US by Ewald (1985) where the participants use such techniques in playful and imaginative ways—or what Ewald refers to in one of her publications as creation of “portraits and dreams”.

Girls with Disabilities and Staging

The discussion above serves to foreground the fact that many of the photovoice images produced by the girls in the fieldwork also drew on staging to represent different forms of inclusion and exclusion. For example, one group staged a scenario where one girl was rejected by one or more members of the group (Fig. 1). Through their staging, they physically enacted what it was that they experienced either symbolically or ‘for real’ at school.

Another type of common staging involved the representation of gender violence where one girl was about to strike another girl as we see in Fig. 2. In the lead up to taking pictures, many of the girls described situations of violence at the hands of peers in and around school, something that is confirmed in the research literature which highlights the fact that girls and women with disability are more likely to be physically and sexually abused (Human Rights Watch 2012).

Fig. 1 One group staged a scenario where a girl was rejected by one or more members of the group



Fig. 2 Common staging involved the representation of gender violence where one girl striking another girl



Alongside the captions they produced to go with the photographs of staging, we also saw that there was a playfulness about this work as they (re)enacted various scenarios. While the element of playfulness and fun in photovoice is something that has been discussed elsewhere (see Mitchell et al. 2015), we see play as particularly important in this instance, with the girls seizing opportunities to role-play, taking charge of what counts as inclusion and exclusion. Dan Goodley and Katherine Runswick-Cole (2010) also write about the use of inclusive play to emancipate disabled children. Traditional conception of play as a child development opportunity assumes that play is an instrumental tool for measuring “normal” development. Disabled children, therefore, are often regarded as being outside this normalized play framework because of their difference. Yet children with various impairments can also use play as an opportunity for redefining the relationships between themselves and the world around them, and in so doing they problematize the norm. The playfulness of participatory visual methodologies can permit inclusion to happen by creating new spaces for imagining the relationships between girls with disabilities and their communities.

Considering the potential for photovoice work to enable the voices *and* bodies of excluded or marginalised persons to be heard and seen, Theberge’s (2007) comment on story-telling is particularly thought provoking:

Photographers have been telling stories through their stories ever since the medium was invented, staging scenes of one kind or another, and directing the actors posing before their cameras. The theatrical photograph has assumed an enormously varied range of forms over the past century and a half, and its interactions with the related areas of theatre, film and video, and the realms of advertising and journalism have taken fascinating directions. One can only wonder why such a rich vein of photographic history has been so little studied (Theberge 2007, p. 7).

In the course of the fieldwork, including in follow-up interviews, the girls had various opportunities to engage in storytelling about their everyday lives. Their stagings and re-enactments could also be regarded as a type of storytelling, as we see above as examples of stories of stigma and violence.

In developing a “learning bodies” framework, we have begun to engage in a further analysis of this staging, drawing on the work of Kress (2000, 2010) and others working in the area of multimodality as applied to media productions by young people. The use of gesture, as Kress notes, is a powerful semiotic device in relation to representations of embodiment in visual research, typically indicating relationships between people, and often symbolizing agency. The use of gesture through the girls’ hand movements was a key element in many of the images. While hands (and gesture) were used in many different ways in the photos, we highlight the very compelling image of the hands of the group of girls touching and inter-linking, and as symbolic of feeling included (Fig. 3).

At the same time this image in particular helps us think about the opposite. What does it mean when one is not part of this grouping? Additionally, in the photo image of a girl holding up a hand as if to push someone away, suggests a type of stigma and rejection (Fig. 1) that could take place at school or in the community. It also, however, makes us ask about what a welcoming gesture would look like.

Fig. 3 Hands of the group of girls touching and interlinking, and as symbolic of feeling



Part 2: On the Ethics of Doing in Visual Research with Girls with Disabilities

We now turn our attention to the idea of visual ethics and what this work might mean in relation to “learning bodies”, acknowledging the important work that various academic organizations such as the International Visual Studies Association (Papademas and IVSA 2009) and the Economic and Social Research Council’s National Centre for Research Methods (see Wiles et al. 2008) have done to create standards and advocacy in relation to visual ethics surrounding the use of such methods as photovoice and participatory video. Our intention was to carry out the photovoice work with the girls, following, for the most part, the steps referred to above, and indeed that is what we did. However as we looked back on the work, and as we ‘reflect forward’ as researchers on what this work might mean, we identified six key areas for reconsidering “least harm and most good” in relation to visual ethics.

Sensory Research as Including or Excluding

We start with the fundamental issue of the politics of sensory research itself, and especially the use of the visual in participatory visual research such as photovoice. What does it mean, for example, to focus on the visual with a group of participants who may have limited sight? This is not a new question and it is worth noting that there are numerous articles about working with participants with various degrees of visual impairments in photovoice projects (See Photovoice n.d; Daw and Badenoch n.d; Zehle 2015). On the one hand, this work could raise dilemmas about privileging sight (over touch, smell, sound). In the very context where we are seeking to be inclusive (and studying inclusion), are we engaging participants in something else that is excluding? On the other hand, if we think of photovoice as

photo + voice, and ‘seeing’ as something that is more symbolic, including the offering of different perspectives on an issue (e.g. “how do you see the issues?”), then ‘sight’ becomes only one part of the equation. The issue then may be one on the ethics of exclusion as Lige (2000) noted, and the ethics of excluding participants with disabilities from engaging in arts-based methods that might include the visual. Several of the girls and the women who co-facilitated the sessions had visual impairments, although all were at least partially sighted. The main challenge in carrying out the fieldwork was in relation to the writing of captions, a problem that was addressed through the several participants working together. In such cases one of the girls would be the scribe. Clearly with other groups of girls with disability, where there may have been more participants with visual impairments, there would have been greater challenges, but what we take from this is the importance of offering participants the opportunity to represent their concerns visually, to see and talk about the issues as they wish to represent them, and to be permitted to work collectively to accomplish this. Although some visual researchers such as Elizabeth Chaplin (2006) might contest the need for captions alongside the photos, we have argued elsewhere (Nguyen et al. 2015; Mitchell et al. 2015) that the power of photovoice rests in the combination of the visual and the narration. Indeed the writing of the captions gave many of the girls an opportunity to add another layer of meaning to their photographs in order to help audiences to understand the pictures better. Overall, then, the addition of the captions meant that the meanings of the images may have also been more accessible for some audiences who might be challenged by the conventional genre of visual photography where ‘seeing’ is used as the key venue for sighted people.

The Right to Be Seen and Heard

What are the ethical dimensions of the use of the visual in a study associated with a population that has typically been ‘hidden from view’? In raising issues about the rights of girls with disabilities to have their bodies ‘seen and heard’, Wiles et al. (2008) observe that the rights of the disabled may be violated through an insistence on anonymity and confidentiality. Schwartzberg (2005) observes in relation to her work with families of disabled children, that often families have very few photographs of a disabled baby or young child compared to the number of photos of other non-disabled children in the family, or that the child would be positioned in such a way that the disability would be obscured. In these ways ‘invisibility’ can lead to the erasure of the right to be seen and heard.

Disability theorists such as Hevey (1992) and Garland-Thomson (2001, 2002) argue that the way disability is pictured in photographs has been predominantly portrayed through images of freak, cripple, disfigurement, and chaos, reflecting able-bodied imaginary of what it means to be disabled. Garland-Thomson (2001) argues that this politics of seeing, characterized by the visual politics of modernity, perpetuates the pre-dominant assumption that disability is ‘lacking’ and imperfect. As she writes:

Starers gawk with abandon at the prosthetic hook, the empty sleeve, the scarred flesh, the unfocused eye, the twitching limb, but seldom do they broaden looking to envelop the whole body of the person with a disability. (Garland-Thomson 2001, p. 347)

In the fieldwork we did not work with a prompt that explicitly asked girls to represent their bodies, but rather, we worked the prompt of ‘feeling including and not included in school’, and as noted above, the issues that they took up were much more about the social contexts of inclusion and exclusion. What we could say, however, is that none of their images carry with them any of the types of markers of disability to which Garland-Thomson or Hevey refer. Nonetheless we argue that this methodological and ethical issue needs to be critically considered when involving disability. Although this physical concern is not present in Fig. 3 with the group that chose spontaneously to represent inclusion through a set of hands, another group may have avoided that particular representation. But hands are only one marker.

Being Seen: Contesting the ‘No Faces’ Protocol

Working with Research Ethics Boards at our respective universities has led us to develop what we have come to term the ‘no faces’ protocol for getting around the trickiness of participants taking pictures of ‘photo subjects’ outside of the group participating in the research. In some cases we have avoided faces completely in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in relation to sensitive topics. In our training sessions we normally engage participants in a discussion exploring what they could take pictures of besides people’s faces, and as part of this work consider the issue of human rights. Typically we provide participants with examples, and while there is often not a ‘black and white’ answer, the ensuing discussion ensures that at least participants are more conscious of the issues in relation to anonymity and confidentiality. It was only in preparation for these workshops that we began to question the limitations of a ‘no faces’ approach. First of all, why a ‘no faces’ approach as opposed to ‘no hands’ or ‘no feet’? Where does the anonymity of the body reside? What if a participant or a photo subject is in a wheelchair? Participants might avoid taking a picture of someone’s face but the wheelchair may be a much more recognizable and identifiable marker.

Ownership and Girls’ Agency in Taking Pictures of Taking Pictures

A critical issue in visual ethics relates to the question of ‘who owns the pictures’ and we have argued that participants have the right to receive copies of the pictures they take in a photovoice project. Something that we had not anticipated in our work with the girls was the fact that many of the girls would own cellphones and that they would use these to take pictures, and indeed, during the fieldwork they were often taking pictures with their cellphones of the various participants taking

pictures using the project cameras. The point was not whether they should take pictures, but rather that as part of our ethics application we had given precise explanations about what would happen to the photos that were taken as part of the photovoice activities. In this case many of the girls had Facebook accounts and were eager to share the work they were doing with friends and families. Do the photos the girls take with their cellphones have the same status as the photos taken with the project cameras? What right (or means for that matter) did we have as researchers to control what they did with photos they took on their own cellphones? While as a research team we were of course able to, in some instances, engage girls in discussion about visual ethics ‘on site’, we found ourselves with a new ethical dilemma. Here we were working with a group of girls who are typically excluded and marginalized but who are, in a sense, included and participating in a broader world via digital and social media.

On the Ethics of Individualism and Collectivity

The photovoice process highlights the collective or collaborative nature of work of girls with disabilities. As we note in the various steps in carrying out photovoice, in section “[The Context of Working With Girls With Disabilities](#)”, there is no ‘absolute’ about all of the steps in the process being carried out in small groups, and indeed, in some of our previous photovoice work, the initial photos, for example, were taken by individuals who had use of the camera for several days and then passed it on to a partner (See Mitchell et al. 2005). However the actual working with/analysing the photos has usually been carried out in small groups. The work produced by the girls in our project sheds light on the significance of challenging individualism and exclusionary practices, not simply as approaches to collaboration and the social construction of knowledge, but also as a way to be inclusive. A feature of a group photovoice project is for participants, working in groups, to take turns in learning the various aspects of picture taking and indeed, we have devised activities for ensuring this. For example, a ‘learning to use the camera activity’ is to enact an ‘each one teach one’ approach so that one person learns how to turn the camera and the flash on and off, take a picture, and then pass the camera to the next one. In our fieldwork, some of the girls had difficulty manipulating the camera or felt shy about doing the picture taking. Does it matter? Can they not either help to direct a ‘shoot’ (including a staging) or participate in a staging themselves? In some cases, the girls did not actually want to operate the camera, but were happy to be part of a picture (as we see in the hands in Fig. 3). Along the same lines, some participatory steps such as writing captions may have been a challenge for some participants, and so working in small groups meant that the girls were able to assist each other.

Speaking for and Speaking With

One final point relates to the responsibilities of the research team itself to engage ethically with the visual data and/or narratives produced by the girls. The narrative data and captions were initially produced in Vietnamese and had to be translated into English. This was an issue in itself in terms of the politics of translation. However a more serious concern relates to eliciting narratives from participants who do not feel they can or want to provide anything beyond the photo they took, or whose narrative was not explicitly about the prompt. There are no fixed rules of course on this except, as Delgado (2015) reminds us, there is always a need for photovoice researchers to have a high tolerance for ambiguity. To what extent should we insist on narrative explanations, and to what extent might we simply go with Chaplin's caution that we leave it to audiences to participate, and as such bring their own interpretation to some of the images? We argue that trying too hard to elicit a response might simply force the participant to agree to a particular comment in a tokenistic way, and in this way we might end up speaking *for* the participants, thereby defeating the very point of photovoice.

Towards a Framework for Visual Ethics in and Through the Body

As Delgado and Staples (2007) and others have written on the notion of 'youth led' interventions, there is a need for researchers to develop frameworks that take seriously what it means to meaningfully engage younger people. Building on this imperative of meaningful engagement, we argue the need for a critical thought about what 'girls-with-disabilities-led' practices might mean in relation to the ethics of engagement and the ethics of visual representation. We do not claim that our analysis is in any way complete. Rather it is emergent from our work within the photovoice workshops that we conducted with one group of 21 girls with disabilities. However, by drawing on both ideas of staging and performance in visual representations ('performing the body') and an analysis of six specific areas of photovoice practice explored through the lens of ethics, we note that a framework to guide a visual ethics of bodily engagement starts with a careful consideration of the broad question, "what does the body have to do with it?" and a number of sub-questions: *Who and what is being challenged in and through the photographs and through the photovoice processes? What are the pedagogical moments to be found in the work? How might the images be viewed by various audiences? Who should be the target audience? Might showing the work risk an accentuation of exclusion and rejection?* If girls with disabilities perceive exclusion as chiefly occurring in their everyday lives amongst peers, in and around schools, should their photos target peer audiences? Or are there particular ethical issues to consider because the girls might be at risk of further exclusion and rejection? Delgado

(2015) observes that some photovoice exhibitions might be directed towards very 'closed' or specific audiences and not for public consumption. But who should decide and what are the most effective ways to consult participants who may not be able to express their views? We see these emerging questions as a starting point for developing a framework of visual ethics in and through the body.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have mapped out what we see as some complicating features of visual ethics of the body emergent from our participatory photovoice work with girls with disabilities in Vietnam. In particular we have highlighted the significance of body and embodiment in the work, drawing attention to both the images that the girls produced, via their photography of stagings and re-enactments, and to several aspects of photovoice process where the girls' actions and practices prompted the need to re-consider the ethics of visual representation. This work with girls with disabilities is particularly critical, we argue, because the participants are typically out of sight, when it comes to policies, services and representation. As such, we believe that our exploration in this new area of visual ethics and "learning bodies" can help to shape new agendas for social justice, and particularly the rights of girls with disabilities to shape how they are seen. As Hevey (2006) observes, "In terms of disabled people's empowerment, this is the single most important statement in all of the works considered" (p. 445). By demonstrating some critical aspects of visual ethics that must be taken into consideration, we believe that this work can challenge disabling stories and discourses about girls with disabilities in the mainstream by shifting power relations between the photographers (girls with disabilities) and their audiences.

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Conclusion: Towards Embodied Theories, Methodologies and Pedagogies

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Abstract In this concluding chapter, we aim to draw together the conceptual, methodological and empirical threads that connect the chapters and sections in the collection; and to consider the implications of this work for the field of youth and childhood studies. We begin our discussion by considering the most recent theoretical developments in the field, in relation to a materialist turn in social science research. We discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this perspective, and the ways in which the chapters in this collection intersect with or realise some of the challenges posed by this perspective.

The Materialist Turn

Recent years have seen an emergence of interest in understanding the materiality of the social. This can be seen across a wide range of social science disciplines including sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy, feminist studies, educational studies, queer studies and postcolonial studies to name a few. This signals that ‘the more textual approaches associated with the so-called cultural turn are increasingly being deemed inadequate for understanding contemporary society...’ (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 2). The insistence that theorising embodiment is central to understanding gender relations places feminism at the forefront of

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bringing the material body into analyses of the social, political, and cultural realms (Budgeon 2015). Feminism is credited with developing theories of subjectivity that insist upon deconstructing the mind/body binary and challenging the role played by privileging the mind in discrediting embodied experience as a legitimate form of knowledge. The dismantling of the Cartesian separation of mind and body has opened up questions about the status of the body in western thought and enabled critique of such a distinction as a product of specific sets of social relations and not a universal given.

Moving beyond the conceptualisation of the body as an essential, unchanging object has led to the development of theories which interrogate the separation of the body from the social. As argued by Grosz (1994, p. xi) ‘part of their [bodies] own “nature” is an organic or ontological “incompleteness” or lack of finality, an amenability to social completion, social ordering and organization’. Specific areas of enquiry have included cosmetic surgery; participation in health regimes; queer embodiment; the maternal body; bodies and technology; racialized bodies; bodies in place and time; bodies and disability; and postcolonial bodies among many others. Strategies for theorising the material body vary. Within feminism, for example, they often consist of bracketing the body off from considerations of women’s abilities, to reclaiming the body as the source of women’s power, to perceiving the body as a textually mediated effect of representational practices or disciplinary discourses (Price and Shildrick 1999). Within these positions the body has been posited as a site of constraint and disorder, embedded within patriarchal social relations which devalue the body, and in contrast, as a site of agency, possibility and transformation. This variation reflects a wider set of questions about the status of the body brought about by challenges associated with postmodernism and the application of poststructuralist principles to the production of sociological knowledge. Theorising the body has tended to be characterised by a tension ‘between the body as known and knowable material object and the body as discursively constituted’ and ‘has led some commentators to question “what the body is”’ (Howson 2013, p. 6). Moving beyond a biomedical model which regards the body as an organic, physical entity that may be ‘manipulated, handled and treated in various ways in isolation from the self’ alternative models challenge the view that the body can be collectively known as a universal category because it is the product of specific historical settings and sets of relations (Howson 2013, p. 7). The aim is to develop ways to study the significance of materiality in context.

From a sociological perspective the body is both material and discursive. It ‘begins from a sensitivity to the relation between “being” and “having” a body, in which embodiment not only serves a bridge between action and biology but also alerts us to’ the ways in which the body is produced through social practices and forms of representation (Howson 2013, p. 9). Any conceptual dualism which maintains a separation between the body and society, or the body and the self, limits our ability to understand how the body is lived (Williams and Bendelow 1998). Innovative models, therefore, necessarily maintain an irreducibility between the material and the discursive.

...biology cannot be regarded as form whose contents are historically provided, nor as a base on which cultural constructs are founded, nor indeed as a container for a mixture of culturally or individually specific ingredients. It is an open materiality, a set of (possibly infinite) tendencies and potentialities which may be developed, yet whose development will necessarily hinder or induce other developments and other trajectories (Grosz 1994, p. 191).

The deconstruction of hierarchical, dualistic frameworks, as a lasting legacy of feminist theorising of embodiment, is now being developed further in a body of research described as 'new materialism' (van der Tuin 2011). Notably, the feminist challenge to humanist thinking is central to current developments which *extend* a postmodernist critique, rather than, return to the brand of materialism espoused in modernist formulations (Coole and Frost 2010). Now, more than ever, the status of the material body and its interaction with other entities such as culture are being rethought. For example in relation to racialized bodies it has been stated that

Bodies do not have inherent meanings. Yet, given the physical properties of bodies and the historical sediment of their intra-actions with ideologies and politico-economic practices, one cannot attach just any meaning to any body. In other words, the body is something more than an inert, passive object on which ideology inscribes meaning, but rather it is an agential reality with its own causal role in meaning making (Hames-Garcia 2008, p. 327).

Like many other fields of enquiry, youth studies is beginning to engage directly with the role of the body in young people's lives, embracing 'the materialist turn' characteristic of other interdisciplinary areas of study. Greater consideration is being given to the interconnections young bodies make within contextually specific settings. Because the field of youth studies is concerned with questions of social justice, 'it focuses on issues of power and privilege on the one hand, and deprivation and exclusion on the other. Sociologically it provides a focus for discussions of structure and agency, illustrating the ways in which young people are constrained by factors such as social class or gender and highlighting the ways in which they can help break down barriers through their own actions' (Furlong 2013, p. 6). As observed more generally in the study of the body, youth studies has also witnessed a tension in theorising the impact of structure as constraint and the effect agency has on the conditioning of young people's everyday worlds. Explicitly bringing the body into the study of youth locates the body within dynamics of both regulation and action. The embodied selves of young people are theorised as in process but not in the teleological sense of an inevitable stage of development or maturation which culminates in the successful achievement of adulthood. Rather, the body here is a body lived through the multiple connections it forms in the course of everyday life. The associated experiences are, therefore, not reducible to a single site, relation, activity or association.

Working productively with the tensions inherent in transcending dualist thought, authors in this collection have highlighted the operation of social dynamics of regulation and normalisation alongside, and in interaction with, forces of resistance, productive connections and unanticipated adaptations. These contributions bring to bear non-reductive theorisations of embodied identity. Migdalek's chapter, for instance, highlights the boundedness of embodied gendered performativity which

young people encounter when experiencing opportunities to choose to embody in non-heteronormative ways. This analysis reveals that agential potential to challenge dominant gender constructions materialise within certain contexts while in others that potential continues to be disciplined, resulting in the marginalisation of alternative gender performances. Jackson's chapter similarly explores how media constructions of femininity impose unattainable ideals on young women and act as a normalising point of reference for their embodied practices of selfhood. However, this relation is never absolute as the young women were also able to inhabit their bodies in ways which exceeded their discipline by gender norms. Because the approaches of these authors are non-reductive, they are able to move beyond the tendency to study youth as a stage in the life course characterised by risk and vulnerability. Similarly Watson and Rice demonstrate that the practice of 'sexting', which has produced anxiety on the part of those worried about the opportunities for exploitation that such a technology presents for young women, is also a practice which creates a space for sexual exploration and the production of subjectivity. Their chapter reveals how the complex entwinement of biology, psyche and society materialise in the practice of embodied sexuality.

As well as challenging gendered binaries and the other structuring binaries which often inform theoretical perspectives of the body, the theoretical approaches drawn on in this collection also challenge assumptions which often normatively frame youth as a period of linear transition which, if performed successfully, marks the achievement of 'normal' and healthy adulthood. Yue's chapter, for example, illustrates the paradoxical conditions which have enabled queer youth to resist forms of neoliberal bodily governance, challenging 'youth in transition' as a uni-directional process. Similarly, approaches which frame the body in one dimensional ways, such as the tendency to reduce the body to a site of risk, are also disrupted by the theoretical approaches drawn on in a number of chapters in this collection. The chapter by Retallack et al. describes the affordances, rather than the risks, in young women's use of social media to challenge the dynamics of post-feminism and visual culture in this domain. The authors show that a new materialist perspective can critically engage with the complex ways gender and feminism assemble. Coffey's chapter similarly draws on perspectives of the body as having capacities to connect and form relations with other bodies and objects to challenge simplistic or one-dimensional notions of health and risk. Chapters by Rinaldi and Rice, and Duff also draw on relational understandings of the body to reconceptualise 'recovering' in contrast to the biopedagogies of risk that tend to frame discussions of recovery from eating disorders and mental illness. Through the focus on the body and embodied theories, these chapters challenge some of the most pervasive conceptual framings of youth as in uni-directional transition or as a period of risk, providing a deeply enriched, more nuanced and theoretically grounded perspective of youth experience.

These theoretical developments have methodological implications which are still being worked through by researchers and feminist scholars, most recently in feminist 'new materialist' approaches (Alaimo and Heckman 2008; Alldred and Fox 2015; Coole et al. 2010; Jackson 2013; Mazzei 2013; Taylor and Ivinson

2013). Many of the authors in this collection add to this space. The implications for this in driving embodied research and theory forward are considered below.

Methodology and Pedagogy

Key questions surround how to mobilise these ‘vitalist’, post-humanist concepts and reconcile them with traditional qualitative approaches which tend to be underpinned by a range of humanist logics (see St. Pierre and Pillow 2000). Attempting to find approaches which better ‘embody theory’ necessitates finding a way for the body—both of the researched and researcher—to be foregrounded. Arguably, in methods such as interviewing, where ‘text’ is produced in the form of a transcript to be read, data becomes separated from the embodied context in which it was produced. Numerous researchers working from a post-modern or post-structuralist approach have critiqued the ‘rational, conscious, stable, unified, knowing individual’ subject of humanism (St. Pierre and Pillow 2000, p. 6) that has underpinned research. This perspective has argued that the researchers’ knowledge is partial and situated. Situated knowledge, or the ‘view from a body’ as Haraway (1988) calls it, emphasises the necessarily embodied and contextual production of all knowledge and experience, in which there are no ‘innocent’ or omniscient perspectives from which to theorise or do research. This may mean rethinking not only methods such as interviewing, but as St Pierre (2011) has suggested, the very foundations of research.

St Pierre (2011) argues that qualitative research methods have stemmed from rationalist, humanist foundations and the ‘principle of individuation’, in which the human subject is ‘separate from everything else and usually master of the universe’, and from which binary assumptions of subject/object, knower/known flow (2011, p. 618). St Pierre argues that this ontological and epistemological perspective has underpinned positivist as well as qualitative research methods, as concepts in social science are based on that ‘I’—individuation: the researcher, participant, data, identity, reflexivity, experience, analysis (p. 619). St Pierre’s primary concern is that due to the recent resurgence of positivism in ‘scientifically-based research’, (privileged in educational research, for example), qualitative research methods have become reductionist, hegemonic and has lost their radical potential. Following postmodernist and post-structuralist modes of analysis, she advocates for finding ways to open up qualitative methodologies, ‘to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently’ (St Pierre 2011, p. 619).

Deleuzian and other post-human approaches aim to de-individualise, ‘to disrupt individuations we believe are real’ (St Pierre 2011, p. 618). Concepts such as ‘events’ (in the place of ‘individuals’ or ‘subjects’) relate to instability and the entangled, processual qualities of all things; a focus on ‘and’ rather than ‘is’. Working from a Deleuzo-Guattarian paradigm in research means no longer thinking of oneself as ‘I’, but as entangled with everyone, everything else. This brings particular implications for those seeking to work pedagogically with this construct

of ‘entanglement’. Elsewhere, Ivinson and Renold (2014) have emphasised the ethico-political potential of new materialist perspectives to enabling a focus on the ‘queer’ moments of rupture or becoming-otherwise that tend to go un-noticed in traditional qualitative analysis. Further questions are generated such as ‘how could research methodologies aim to affirm life’s positive capacity for difference?’ (Coffey 2012, p. 15).

Many of the contributions in this book engage with this question as they illustrate how embodied practices can foster and harness learning with and through entanglement; and demonstrate methods which disrupt and destabilise norms, and assist participants to experience and live their bodies in different ways. Indeed, the cumulative work of these chapters shows that a focus on the embodied nature of learning can bring new possibilities in research, analysis, ethics and politics. It does this in part because it generates methodological implications for those concerned with learning—whether this be interest in learning through the research encounter or a pedagogical interest in devising the learning programs used to lead others towards new real-isations. Bhana’s chapter for example explores the under-studied area of boys’ gendered embodiments and the ways boys learn to do gender in school settings. Fox and Alldred discuss the potentials of Deleuzian and materialist perspectives to understand instances of ‘resisting’ learning. Mulcahy’s chapter demonstrates the ways affects and assemblages produce the capacities of bodies to engage in deep learning as they use objects and bodies to explore a past in the present. Cahill’s chapter illustrates the generative way in which new possibilities in social relations can be produced through the use of pedagogic innovations which incorporate a learning with and through the assemblage of bodies and ideas. Both Migdalek and Cahill show ways in which the body can be used to elicit engagement with shaping discourses and help to illustrate the ways in which the political plays out in the personal. Each of these authors illuminates the potential for a learning through embodied methods to de-individuate experience, to harness complexity and multiplicity, and to locate learning within the collective co-created assemblage of the material and the discursive.

A capacity for embodied engagement with complexity and affect has implications for health as well as for learning. As Duff’s chapter shows, focusing on affective capacities can help us to better understand how to promote diverse modes of recovery (or ‘recovering’) for young people. Similarly, Mitchell et al. demonstrate the way in which a focus on what bodies can do prompts a re-cognition of the way in which a politics of erasure can negate the possibility of learning with and from those who with physical disabilities. They challenge the very ethics of representation through which we come to depict who a person can be. The method of photo-voice Mitchell et al. employ has implications methodologically, for thinking through how the body is read, represented and produced through the participants’ photographs. Visual methods and images are drawn upon by a number of other authors in this collection (Duff, Mulcahy, Erni, Retallack et al., Jackson, Cahill,

Migdalek) to engage the young body in a vast range of settings and contexts. Whilst these perspectives do not aim to produce accounts of the body ‘beyond representation’, they can assist in enabling the body’s materiality to be felt and addressed in a range of ways which are not always possible through text-based methods such as interviews. The affordances of digital methodologies for researching the body are also included in this collection. Erni’s chapter for example uses a ‘netography’ to document the particular forms of vernacular masculinity that assemble on Hong Kong ‘sex chat’ sites; and Retallack et al. explore the ways feminist activism is enabled by social media platforms as a way of mobilising challenges to sexism and pressures to strive for bodily perfection.

Embodied, visual, arts-based and digital methodologies will continue to be developed in response to recent efforts to pursue non-representational methodologies (Vannini 2015). This is not necessarily in the space of getting ‘beyond representation’ in the sense of ‘solving’ or transcending the issues with representing data (as discussed in relation to St. Pierre’s work above). Rather, the success in these methods lies not in the degree to which they objectively ‘represent’ or reproduce a scenario, but rather for what the engagement (or research entanglement) produces. As Vannini argues, there is no one right way of ‘doing’ non-representational methodologies; rather it is a sensibility or an orientation to data drawn recent insights, critiques and developments in qualitative feminist methodologies such as those by St. Pierre (1997, 2002, 2011), St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) and Lather (2001, 2007), and numerous others. These examples will contribute to expanding the frameworks and possibilities for those designing the methods used to generate learning and research encounters.

Conclusion

This collection has aimed to show—theoretically, empirically and pedagogically—the implications that emerge from a reframed approach to understanding children and youth through a focus on the body and embodiment. The chapters in this collection have aimed to contribute to the interdisciplinary fields of youth and childhood studies through extending the growing focus on the body as both a conceptual tool and site of experience in feminist sociology, cultural studies and education. They work to problematise the core discourses and knowledge which currently frame not only discussions of the body, but youth and childhood more generally: those of risk, informed by psycho-social developmental approaches. Much mainstream work on youth approaches the body through a paradigm of psychosexual development related to ‘maturation’, in which young bodies are understood within a linear teleolog relating to the broader story of youth becoming adults. Experiences which fall outside or beyond this normative framing become ‘problems’ to be addressed or regulated, and youth themselves are characterised as being ‘at risk’. Theoretically, this collection challenges and unsettles this thinking and opens new possibilities for theory, research and practice in fields of youth and

childhood studies. Through a focus on the body, the authors not only approach the individual, but also embrace social and material as the context through which young bodies are lived. We suggest that the chapters in this collection show that a focus on the body and embodiment can contribute to more sensitive, nuanced and theoretically grounded perspectives of youth experience.

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