October 2016

Learning To Be Women: A Study of Adolescent Girls in Rural Ontario

Laura Lockhart
The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor
Dr. Rebecca Coulter
The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

© Laura Lockhart 2016

Abstract

In order to explore the forming subjectivities of rural young women, the material and discursive conditions of girls' lives are examined with a focus on how rural adolescent girls come to understand themselves within their worlds, how their consciousness of limitations and possibilities develops, and how this translates into agency and self-direction. The analysis draws on data collected during five months of ethnographic research with seven grade ten, eleven, and twelve female students in a rural community in Ontario's near north. It starts from their experiences in order to look at their lives and options from their standpoint.

Using Bourdieu's social theory, feminist standpoint theory, and scholarship on place, this study builds on and contributes to the critical scholarship on girlhood and rurality, and the infrequently considered intersection of these two social constructs. Also considered are the ways in which social media redefines these social constructs and has significant impacts on how these rural girls' understand themselves, understand and relate to others, and construct visions for their futures.

Through data collected from four individual interviews with each participant, including one interview using photo-voice methods, and four focus group sessions in which the girls had considerable control over the topics, the young women reveal temporal understandings of themselves as they discuss who they "were," who they "are," and who they "want to be." As the girls interpreted their material conditions and negotiated the discourses available to them, a consciousness of life's possibilities and limitations emerged. These young women envisioned their future selves, largely in opposition to the place-based discourses they felt were stigmatizing. Revealing

ambivalence toward their rural locality, the young women celebrated the nurturing power of nature and the rural but felt the pull of the alluring urban where they envisioned escaping the stigmas of rural life to become "successful." Apparent, too, is their expanding knowledge of a hierarchy of place, which they both accept and resist. The analysis also reveals how providing the participants with a safe space, where their individual and collective voices were heard and privileged, fostered consciousness-raising and learning.

Key Words: rural girlhood, rural Ontario, female adolescence, ethnography, feminist standpoint theory, Bourdieu's social theory, social media

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people who have been instrumental throughout this journey.

With deepest gratitude, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Coulter, whose unwavering guidance and support have been paramount in the completion of this work. Your belief in me has allowed me to grow as a person, and as a scholar. Thank you for your dedication throughout this process and for affording me the opportunity to work with and learn from you.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my supervisory committee, Dr. Aniko Varpalotai, and Dr. Melody Viczko. Your insight and support have been remarkable. I feel fortunate to have met and learned from you both.

I extend a heartfelt thank you to my mother and father, Kerry and Fraser, for instilling in me the importance of both education and perseverance. Thank you for always believing in and supporting me. I am forever grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank the young women who volunteered their time to participate in this study. I have learned so much from you. Thank you for sharing your experiences, thoughts, hopes, dreams, and fears with me. This work is dedicated to you.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Chapter 1
Introduction

Rural Like Me

As a young woman I attended secondary school in a rural community. Like many other young women, I began to question the possibilities for my own future and success. At the same time I was learning to subsume my wishes to those of the males in my life. I learned that girls were expected to be pleasing, polite and nice. Smiling was crucial, as was "taking a joke," when being sexually harassed. When I returned to the rural community as a secondary school teacher, my own experiences caused me to reflect further on the lives of adolescent females, the variety of sites from which they are learning about themselves, how they relate to their surroundings, the possibilities and limitations they perceive for their futures, and how they are creating and negotiating their own unique identities in a shared culture of rural girlhood.

In trying to satisfy my own curiosity about how young women growing up rural understand and cope with their daily life experiences, I turned to the literature only to discover that limited research has been done on the socialization and education of rural young women in Canada. To contribute to closing this gap in our knowledge about girls, rural life and schooling in Ontario, my research was designed to provide insight into the experiences, culture, and aspirations of adolescent girls in Ontario's near north and had two additional objectives in mind: to expand our knowledge of rural youth, and inform educators about ways to understand and support young women.

Research Questions

Using a feminist lens, my research focuses on interpreting and understanding rural girlhood through an ethnographic study of seven girls' lives in a school and community in Ontario's near north. Three research questions guided my study: (1) How do young women growing up in rural, near north Ontario come to understand their world and their place within it? (2) How does their consciousness of life's possibilities and limitations develop? (3) How does their "knowing" shape their willingness to exercise agency and direct their own lives? To address these questions I collected qualitative data over a five-month period in 2015, in four semi-structured individual interviews with each participant, and using four focus groups, photo-voice methods, and participant-observations at community events.

Theoretical Influences

As a researcher, I recognize that my own experiences and understandings shape my research questions, as well as decisions about data collection and analysis. Charmaz (2005) agrees that no researcher is neutral and we do not come to our inquiries uninitiated, but goes on to argue that "What we know shapes, but does not necessarily determine, what we 'find'" (p. 510). In other words, a researcher must recognize and acknowledge a theoretical orientation and other influences, while at the same time remaining open to seeing what the evidence reveals.

Elements of both feminist standpoint theory and Bourdieu's concept of habitus provide an effective framework for my research. Key understandings from these theories work well together to provide a way to examine empowerment, agency and change in the lives of young women. Feminist standpoint theory instructs me to begin with young women's experiences as a way of knowing and speaking (Smith, 2005), and to recognize the many factors, such as race, class and place, that contribute to the subjectivities of young women. Bourdieu's social theory, particularly his work on habitus and forms of capital, also offers useful ways to think about structure and agency and how social consciousness develops.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist standpoint theory was developed as a way of locating knowledge or inquiry in women's standpoint or in women's experiences; moreover, theorists began exploring women's individual experiences as a method for discovering the social (Smith, 1997). Scholars using feminist standpoint theory also recognize that "woman" is not a unitary category and that women are a diverse group with different class, cultural, and racialized backgrounds, who inhabit many different social realities, and endure oppression in various ways (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Feminist standpoint theory focuses my research inquiry on the actualities of young women's lives – where they live, what they experience, and where discourse happens and does its constituting of reality (Smith, 1997) while also reminding me to take account of differences.

What one does and experiences in the actualities of life, both enables and limits what one can know (Harding, 2009). Thus, by examining experience, which is saturated

with the social relations of discourse, I am given access to the social character of rural young women's worlds (Smith, 1997). The knowledge young women (and young men) have by virtue of their experience is a knowledge of the local practices of their everyday worlds. This knowing is the very texture of daily living as it exposes what people do, how they go about things, and what can get done. This knowing becomes knowledge when it is entered into language through the course of telling (Smith, 1997). Some women have wanted to go directly from what is known, by virtue of how they participate in society, to knowledge at the level of a universal discourse. In this vein, feminist standpoint theory is often interpreted as making foundational knowledge claims in which women's experience is privileged, rather than, as it will be formulated in my own research, taking young women's standpoint and beginning in their experience as a method to gain access to daily, local, situated knowledge.

Pierre Bourdieu and Habitus

The focus on daily, local and situated knowledge, found at the heart of feminist standpoint theory, is also prevalent in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly, in the relationships between his concepts of habitus, cultural capital, the field, and the resulting practice. While it is Bourdieu's concept of habitus, in particular, that I find theoretically attractive in helping me understand the girls' experiences as an access point to their situated knowledge and practice, scholars have pointed out that Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and the field, while often discussed in isolation, offer greater explanatory power when understood and discussed as interconnected (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). As

4

such, it is necessary to first position my understanding of the relationship among these concepts, before emphasizing the concept of habitus.

Bourdieu (1997) delineates three fundamental forms of capital, which he argues are mutually constitutive: economic, social and cultural. While the term "capital" is often associated, in a more material sense, with the economic sphere, Bourdieu's use of the term is much broader. For Bourdieu, forms of capital extend beyond the material to the immaterial, or symbolic realms of the social and cultural. Cultural capital refers to a collection of elements such as knowledge, education, and skills, which, in part, determine one's position in a given field (Maton, 2008). It is important to note here that cultural capital can exist in three forms: objectified, institutionalized and embodied states (Bourdieu, 1997). In its objectified state, Bourdieu refers to cultural capital, which can be appropriated both materially and symbolically, as cultural goods such as books and pictures, whereas institutionalized capital, which is a form of objectification, refers to institutional recognition, often taking the form of academic credentials or qualifications that symbolize cultural competence and authority. In its embodied state, Bourdieu refers to cultural capital as long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body that are acquired over time, often through culture, traditions and the process of socialization. When conceptualized in this way, cultural capital is closely related to, and arguably, essential in understanding Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Although embodied cultural capital and habitus are often discussed as distinct concepts or processes, the accrual of embodied cultural capital and the construction of habitus are "two sides of the same socialization process: the situated internalization of cultural schemas" (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014, p. 207).

Bourdieu (1977) developed the concept of habitus to demonstrate the ways in which the body is in the social world, but also the ways in which the social world is in the body. Moreover, habitus can be described as the learned set of preferences or dispositions, which are durable and transposable, and by which a person orients to the world (Bourdieu, 2002). Bourdieu has also termed habitus as "socialized subjectivity" or subjectivity that is conditioned by structural circumstances such that those segments of society that share similar conditions of existence will also share similar habitus. When read in this way, Bourdieu's concept of habitus offers some explanatory power for my research. I ask how young women in a rural community come to understand their world and their place within it, or, in other words, how these young women develop subjectivities. I also ask how these young women develop a consciousness of life's possibilities and limitations. Habitus, in part, speaks to both questions. Taking Bourdieu's explanation of habitus as a structured subjectivity, or the values and dispositions gained from our cultural history (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002), reminds me that these young women are not held captive by their histories, nor can they fully escape them, and that such histories are partly responsible for their current understandings of themselves and their worlds. Further to this, recognizing that these young women do share similar conditions of, first, being female, and second, living in the same rural community, supports my understanding of a collective habitus, while, at the same time, I aim to unpack their unique senses of self within this shared realm of rural girlhood.

Bourdieu's use of habitus is intended to be the link between the individual and the social, the objective and the subjective, and between structure and agency (Maton, 2008). While Bourdieu attempts to balance these dualisms, he is often read as favoring structure

over agency, and as a determinist who has little to offer feminist research (Dillabough, 2004). Some feminist scholars argue that Bourdieu fails to fully integrate his discussions of a gendered habitus with his work on the concept of the field (McNay, 1999), making it important to clearly identify the inherent relationship between these two concepts. Bourdieu's concept of the field refers to settings in which agents are located, and further to this, Bourdieu maintains that one's location, or position, within a given field, depends on the amount of capital he or she possess (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014). It is crucial to understand Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus, as interconnecting, as no single element acts alone. Maton (2008) argues that our practice results from the relationship among our dispositions (habitus) and our position in a field (capital), within that current social arena (field). In other words, when I speak of each girl's habitus, I am also referring to her capital within a given field.

Turning back to the common criticism of determinism with which Bourdieu is often charged, it is important to note that Bourdieu insists habitus be understood as a generative structure and within certain objective limits of a given field, and, as such, it offers the potential for an infinite number of behavioral patterns, thought patterns, and self-expressions (McNay, 1999). However, while Bourdieu intends for his concepts of habitus and the field to offer an alternative understanding of the subject as socially embedded, and as having embodied dispositions, shaped by her location in a social field, some scholars have questioned the extent to which this, ultimately, is an account of social determination and reproduction where habitus is essentially reducible to the effects of a given field (Kenway & McLeod, 2004). Judith Butler (1999), for example, argues that the relationship between the field and habitus is a one-way correspondence where the effects

7

of the field establish the habitus, but there is no reciprocal effect of the habitus upon the field. In an attempt to rework the relationship between habitus and the field to be understood as less deterministic, other scholars emphasize the potential for improvising and inventiveness, working in conjunction with the structural and shaping characteristics of the habitus (McLeod, 2005). I position myself in the latter group. With respect to the participants in this study, I acknowledge that their habitus has been shaped by the fields they have encountered over time, and in which they are currently located; however, I do not believe their understandings of themselves and their worlds, or their beliefs about life's possibilities and future plans have been, in totality, determined by these fields. I position myself alongside the understanding of scholars like Dillabough (2004) who read Bourdieu as suggesting that individuals, while certainly being "bound by social conditions" are not determined by them. She argues that Bourdieu "endows subjects with the capacity to act in the social world without claiming a totalizing agency or an illusory, essentialist notion of freedom" (p. 498).

While young women's experiences do reflect the social positions in which they occurred, inherent in the concept of habitus is the possibility of new thoughts and actions that are capable of transcending the social conditions in which they were created (Reay, 2004). Bourdieu (1990a) posits choice, or "the art of inventing" (p. 55), as central to his concept of habitus, while, at the same time, recognizing that these choices are constrained by a framework of opportunities and external circumstances. When read in this way, the concept of habitus allows for girls' individual agency within a given framework or structure. As Bourdieu simultaneously reads across both subjectivism, which edits out agency, and objectivism, which includes agency that is regulated by cultural contexts, he

8

insists that practice is always formed by a sense of agency, but that opportunities to exert agency must be contextualized in relation to the objective structures of culture (Webb et al., 2002).

According to Bourdieu (1998), an individual's ability to gain knowledge of, and negotiate a variety of cultural fields, is, in part, dependent on what he calls "practical sense." This practical sense, or feel for the game, refers to knowledge of both written and unwritten rules, discourses, and forms of capital and values that determine how people behave in certain contexts, or fields. This practical sense allows a young woman to make sense of what is happening around her, and to make strategic decisions about how to negotiate various fields (Webb et al., 2002). In the context of my research, Bourdieu's notion of practical sense helps me to understand the girls', at times, contradictory behaviors and beliefs, as they negotiate practices and gendered discourses while moving through various fields and circumstances.

Finally, it is important to note the ways in which feminist standpoint theory and Bourdieu's concept of habitus are complementary influences for this research. To reiterate, feminist standpoint theory makes clear that women are a diverse group with different class, cultural, and racialized backgrounds, who inhabit many different social realities, and endure oppression in various ways (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Bourdieu also accounts for such intersections in his use of habitus. In his concept of a collective habitus, it may appear as though Bourdieu is in stark opposition to such intersectionality. However, much like feminist standpoint theory, which recognizes individual differences under an umbrella of female similarities, Bourdieu (1990b), too, recognizes such differences and diversity among members of similar class and cultural groupings, and

maintains that, "just as no two individual histories are identical so no two habituses are identical" (p. 46).

Also central to feminist standpoint theory is the belief that what one does and experiences in the actualities of life both enables and limits what one can know (Harding, 2009). Daily life experience and individual histories are also at the heart of habitus. Habitus is a product of experiences and is continually restructured with the gaining of new experiences and encounters with the outside world (Reay, 2004). Bourdieu's ideas of habitus and practice were, in part, intended to highlight the notion that "there is a practical knowledge that has its own logic, which cannot be reduced to that of theoretical knowledge; that in a sense, agents know the social world better than the theoreticians" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 252).

Literature Review

Nearly two decades ago Varpalotai (1998) observed that while growing attention was being paid to questions about diversity among Canadian youth, few studies addressed the lives and experiences of rural youth, particularly in the area of gender and education. While much of Canada's vast geography could be defined as rural, Richardson (2000) points out that relatively little attention has been paid to the needs of rural schools and educators and Varpalotai (2005) emphasizes that even less attention has been paid to girls and women in these areas. Writing about the United States, Seaton (2007) notes that rural girls, in particular, face a number of challenges that may not exist within urban communities yet are often silenced or rendered invisible by academic research. Morris (2008) concurs and confirms that while much has been written to document the gender

discourses operating in urban girls' lives, less is known about inequality, gender and schooling in rural contexts. This is unfortunate, since as Morris (2008) argues, studies of the experiences of rural youth can yield important understandings, especially when bringing those rural-based studies into the already abundant urban-based literature on gender inequality in schools.

Although little attention has been paid to rural youth in Canada, particularly, in Ontario, a growing interest among scholars internationally can be discerned. Some of the specific areas of focus worldwide include the effects of neoliberal discourses about equality when they are applied to rural disadvantage (Cuervo, 2014); the exclusion of rural young people from the sociology of youth and the need to move towards a more spatialised youth sociology (Farrugia, 2014); and conflicts between place-based emotional connections and more instrumental considerations among rural youth considering their futures (Power, Norman, & Dupre, 2014; Prince, 2014).

In one of the few recent studies of Ontario, Cairns (2014) argues that there is a need for explorations of the gendered contexts of rural social spaces to aid in understanding how young women construct contradictory future narratives as they envision urban femininities for themselves alongside their desire to live in rural areas. My work responds to Cairns' call for further examinations of young women in rural spaces and importantly adds another Canadian voice to the limited knowledge about rural youth.

Defining the Rural: Place and Set of Meanings

For the purpose of my research, which was conducted in a community and secondary school located in a rural region of Ontario's near north, I began with this

definition of "rural and small town": a population living outside the commuting zone of larger urban areas, having less access to health services, education facilities, financial institutions, and cultural centers (Du Plessis, Beshiri, Bollman, & Clemenson, 2002). I use the term community to describe a geographic area that includes both a town as well as a significant amount of surrounding agricultural and uncultivated land. The community I selected for my research can also be seen as seasonal. During the summer months, the population increases significantly, as tourists, mostly from large urban centers, visit the area. For the permanent residents, much of the region's year-round economic stability is dependent on how lucrative these few summer months are.

In an effort to further clarify what is meant by "rural," it is important to note that ideas about what constitutes rurality exist on a spectrum. Ramsey, Annis, and Everitt (2003) suggest that descriptions of "rural" include basic information such as size, population and location, as well as more comprehensive information including economic and social attributes. This more comprehensive description of my research site will be provided in the second chapter. However, I note here that I use the term "rural" to describe both a place and a set of meanings.

Descriptive material information is, of course, important for grounding any study, but Manzo (2003) argues that place is an ontological structure and a fundamental part of our existence and subjectivities. In other words, the cultural meanings and complexity of places should be considered in any research study. Jones (2005) states that more complex considerations of place, whether experienced, remembered or imagined, actively contribute to the formation of one's identity.

Place identity, a term coined by Prohansky (1978), refers to a substructure of one's identity consisting of the positive and negative effects, symbolic meanings and beliefs about one's physical environment. More recently, Dixon and Durrheim (2004) extracted four key components of place identity. They argue that place identity involves a deep sense of familiarity arising from habituation to the physical environment, a sense of emotional belonging within the environment, the ways in which the physical environment takes on symbolic meanings in relation to the self, and the role of the physical environment in enabling the formation of identities. Adding to this, Leyshon and Bull's (2011) research shows how rural youth enact their identities, in part, through repeated contact and experiences with everyday places.

The notion of place as a key-contributing factor in the forming of identities, or subjectivities, of youth appears particularly apropos to my research. Exploring this idea has been useful in answering my research questions about how rural young women understand their worlds, and, particularly, how their perceptions of their life's possibilities and limitations develop. Prince (2014) argues that young people's visions for their futures are inextricably bound to place. For the young women in my study, rural as a place actively contributes to their presently forming subjectivities and the future possibilities they perceive for themselves.

Along with place, rural is often described as a set of meanings, but meaningfulness of place and culture is difficult to explain or appreciate. A key barrier to appreciating the rural is the deficiency ascribed to rural ways of being by the largely urban cultural mainstream (Howley, Howley, & Yahn, 2014). These messages are often internalized by rural youth. For example, in a Canada wide study, many rural youth

13

described their communities as being like "Homer Simpson," a place where people lacked initiative, knowledge of the outside world, and cultural competence (Malatest & Associates, 2002). On the other hand, as Rye (2006) points out, many positive attributes are often ascribed to rural ways of life. Rural residents in many parts of the world frequently cite greater feelings of safety and community and believe rural settings offer the most desirable sites for raising families. Research has illuminated complex and contradictory constructions of the rural by examining perceived deficiencies alongside perceived desirable characteristics. However, as Cuervo (2014) shows, many rural youth, worldwide, continue to construct rural places as socially and culturally isolated and deficient of the opportunities they believe are available in urban centres. The critique by youth of their home communities validates Corbett's (2007a) argument that we need to study the impact of a dominant culture characterized by urban values on the creation of rural identities, an argument to which my research is attentive.

According to Blake and Nurse (2003), nostalgic ideals of rural Canada do a remarkable disservice to rural life and culture in that they reduce the lived experiences of rural Canadians to a simplistic and one-dimensional essence that cannot approximate the complexity of gender relations or the hopes and dreams of rural Canadians. Blake and Nurse argue that there is a need for new research that uncovers rural complexities, and considers how they can be understood in an educational context in order to enrich the lives of rural youth.

Girlhood, Girls' Lives and Rural Girls

It should be noted here that I use the terms "girls" and "young women" interchangeably when describing female adolescents. The female participants in my study were fifteen to eighteen years of age. While they are becoming young women, adolescent females, including those who participated in this study, most often refer to themselves as girls, and in keeping with their usage and common practice in much of the academic literature, I will, as noted, use both terms interchangeably.

However, I would like to draw a distinction between "girlhood" and the study of girls' lives. The concept of "girlhood" is not synonymous with the term "girls" or the study of girls' lives. Girlhood is a social construct and references a set of dominant social meanings and understandings around gender roles, expectations and performativity. In contrast, to speak of girls, or the study of girls' lives, means to speak of their actual lived experiences, the realities of their lives as young females. Understanding both dominant social meanings and actual lived experiences has allowed me to make sense of the participants' lives.

Girlhood

Before turning to the literature on girls' lives and rural girls, it is important to explore the wider social context relevant to understanding the position of young women, in general. Following the policy gains made possible by the work of feminist activists in the 1970s and 1980s who promoted female educational access (Coulter, 1999), a "failing boys" and "successful girls" discourse emerged in the mid-1990s (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Ringrose, 2007; Watson, 2011). This discourse is problematic in that it sets

up a binary opposition in schooling between boys and girls, where one group must lose at the expense of the other. Gonick (2006) argues that this discourse can be read as a part of a postfeminist narrative, one that exists within the broader political, social and economic goals of neoliberalism, and advocates for a steady withdrawal of government support and social services, while positing possessive individualism as the highest human achievement. Young women then internalize this narrative of the self-determined subject who does not require social supports (Pomerantz, Raby & Stefanik, 2013) and this leaves them with few explanations for any lack of individual success, other than their own individual failings (Gonick, 2006).

Young women are negotiating the formation of their subjectivity at a time when girls are seen as academically successful and the school system has turned its attention to the "boy problem" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Constructing girls as the competitive winners in schooling attributes characteristics to them that are normatively masculine. Ringrose (2007) argues that considerable tension and stress is created for girls as they then attempt to juggle both masculine and feminine qualities. As Raby (2010) shows, girls must actively negotiate contradictory gendered discourses in order to locate their forming subjectivities within and against those discourses. At the same time, as part of "having it all," girls are pressured to conform to popular standards of femininity and beauty in order to be seen as "real" girls (Coulter, 2012; Pomerantz, Raby & Stefanik, 2013).

Of course, the negotiation of gendered discourses is not a new challenge for girls. Way (2013) points out that adolescent girls, in a social context, have always learned through discourse how to construct identities in ways that are socially acceptable and

there is a vast body of literature that focuses on the discourses about girls and girlhood. Pipher's (1994) work suggests two discourses that are of particular relevance to recent, and, arguably, current organizations of meaning around girls and girlhood: "Reviving Ophelia" and "Girl Power." Since their nearly simultaneous emergence in early 1990s (Gonick, 2006), these discourses are often found in the literature as central points of discussion around girls' voice, agency, resistance and gendered subjectivities. The discourse labeled "Girl Power" positions girls as assertive and free from the constraints of femininity. As McRobbie (2008) demonstrates, it is entrenched in a post-feminist narrative of girls' successes that works to make gendered and sexual inequalities invisible. The discourse Pipher (1994) called "Reviving Ophelia," on the other hand, describes a crisis of girlhood and presents young women as passive, delicate and voiceless. Researchers have found that in attempting to perform an Ophelia-like femininity, girls may be silenced and sacrifice their agency as they are pressured to set aside their authentic selves, and become what the dominant culture encourages and values (Currie & Kelly, 2006). Silence first becomes an issue as girls move into adolescence (see, for example, Iglesias & Cormier, 2002) and scholars have documented this phenomenon for more than three decades. The original work of Gilligan (1982) is also notable in this regard. This silencing not only refers to a literal voice, but also includes an inhibition toward displaying emotions that are not acceptable for modern day Ophelias such as anger, frustration and displeasure (Gilligan, 2013).

Girls' Lives

Operating at the local level, amongst the discourses of girlhood that young women are continually negotiating, are the daily realities of girls' lives in which these negotiations play out. Over the past two decades, scholars have written about adolescent girls' lives in a variety of contexts. More descriptive, materialist studies have looked at girls' lives with respect to areas such as relationships with friends and family, and education and schooling. Many scholars have also studied girls' lives from a cultural perspective, focusing on issues such as sexuality (see, for example, Fine, 1988; Fine & McClelland, 2006), popular culture (see, for example, Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009; Driscoll, 2002), and intersectionality (see, for example, Jiwani, Steenbergen, & Mitchell, 2006; Pomerantz, 2009; Weems, 2009). Regardless of the contexts in which girls' lives are discussed, there have been consistent theoretical concepts that often shape different approaches to understanding girls' lives: agency, resistance, and identity, or, subjectivity. While this list is by no means exhaustive, these concepts have been central to much of the recent literature on girls' lives, are particularly apropos to my own research questions, and will be the focus of the following discussion. I note here that agency and resistance are often discussed as inextricable, and identity and subjectivity often used synonymously and, therefore, will be discussed as such.

Agency and resistance. Since the early 1970s, agency and resistance have been critical concepts in the fields of youth studies, sociology of education, and school ethnographies (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; McRobbie, 1978; Willis, 1978) for conceptualizing the relationships between young people and their social worlds (Gonick,

Renold, Ringrose, & Weems, 2009). The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of a focus on girls' lives in the literature, in part because Gilligan (1982) highlighted that girls were missing from studies of youth culture. Driscoll (2002) and Harris (2004) later noted that early work in women's studies often gave voice to adult women, but overlooked the voices of adolescent girls. As a result, earlier work on girls' lives sought to address the lack of attention that had been paid to girls by exploring their identities, desires, goals, needs, and behaviors, while later work in girls' studies built upon and refined the discussions that resulted from these earlier studies.

A focus on agency and bringing girls' voices to the forefront of research continued into the 1990s. Gilligan and Brown (1992) were part of this continued quest and in their book, *Meeting at the Crossroads,* strove to listen to girls and to discover ways for girls to reclaim their lost voices. Continuing in this vein, Gilligan, with Taylor and Sullivan (1995), wrote *Between Voice and Silence*, further illuminating the ways in which they believed adolescent girls were losing their resistant, authentic voices and conforming to a more socially acceptable passive femininity, an argument also echoed in Pipher's (1994) *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. Scholars were responding to these assertions, often using schools as sites for gaining deeper insights into girls' lives. For example, in an ethnographic study of two American middle schools, Orenstein (1994) observed that in many classrooms, girls sat silently while boys actively participated in the class, raising their hands and voicing their answers. In her findings, Orenstein suggested that adolescent girls have lower expectations and confidence in themselves and their abilities than adolescent boys. Such discussions of girls' muted and lost voices begged questions around agency and resistance. First, what counts as agency?

19

What counts as resistance? And second, if girls are not voicing their wants, needs, and desires, and lack a collective voice to articulate gender inequalities and promote social justice, how do they develop a sense of agency and/or resist dominant discourses of girlhood?

While traditional approaches to agency pointed to the individual's capacity and power to take action (Davies, 1990), feminist scholars, such as Smith (1987), criticized this way of conceptualizing agency, pointing out that women are discursively constituted as non-agents where the traditional model does not apply to them. Smith (1987) further argued that taking women's experiences into account, the equating of action to agency is not automatic, but rather, contingent upon the discursive practices in use and a woman's position within those practices. In the context of girls' lives, "resistance" has also been difficult to define. Raby (2005) suggests that the term needs to be used carefully as it can become diluted when used too broadly. It is important to note that not all girls resist in the same way. Girls' lives include discursive structures to resist and, like agency, acts of resistance are unique to their individual social locations (McRobbie & Garber, 2000). For example, Durham (1999a) examined the ways in which teen girls resist patriarchal discourses in media messages, calling for a broader recognition of types of resistance and an opening up of what counts as resistance.

Moving into the 21st century, scholars continued to work on opening up the definitions of agency and resistance, while studying the loss of voice phenomenon, and the resulting perception of a lack of agency and resistance amongst adolescent girls. For example, in 2009, Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz conducted an ethnographic study with young women, focusing on a variety of ways of doing girlhood, specifically looking at

how "skater girls," and girls who engaged in online activities, moved beyond traditional femininity while occupying spaces that were traditionally male. This study found that some skater girls embodied resistance in their personal style by dressing casually and not wearing makeup, and also noted that online environments can open up the possibility of resistance for girls by allowing them to express themselves in ways that are not always possible at school. At the same time, Gonick, Renold, Ringrose, and Weems (2009) also sought to rethink agency and resistance and asked, what might come after girl power? The authors argue that girls' gendered agency is practiced within normative social, economic, and political processes, and that the constraints of gender and normative femininity are therefore always present in agency and resistance. However, Gonick et al. (2009) also point out that while some aspects of femininity are individualized, they are still dynamic and open to transformation; therefore, they call for more complex theorizations of agency and resistance that highlight which aspects are enabling, and which are constraining, opening up femininity as contingent and ambiguous. Gonick et al. (2009) further suggest that girls' agency and resistance be theorized as articulated and evidenced within the logic of gender production, the body, and sexual and cultural differences. This presents an embodied creation of gendered subjectivity in which contingent and ambiguous practices of identity are central.

Gendered subjectivity. The study of gender identity in education began to emerge as central in the 1970s after scholars argued that, at the time, research was too narrowly focused on girls' education, access, and attainment, and was entrenched in middle-class values that rigidly defined what it meant to be "female" (Francis & Skelton,

2001). However, the past two decades of feminist research have seen a shift from humanist conceptions of identity, to poststructuralist conceptions of identity, more commonly referred to as subjectivity. Many poststructural feminist scholars argue that the category "woman," as it has been produced within humanism's grid of regularity and normalcy, contributes to gender inequalities by further limiting the already societally restricted subject positions available for young women to occupy (Butler, 1995). Poststructuralism argues for an individual subject as one who exhibits agency as she constructs herself by taking up available discourses and cultural practices, but at the same time, is forced into subjectivity by those same available discourses and practices (St. Pierre, 2000). While humanists view the individual as intentional, choosing and fully conscious, poststructuralists formulate individuals as intentional subjects, and actors in the world, that are subject to forces beyond their conscious control such as history, culture, and language (Jones, 1997). Taking a poststructuralist approach to the construction of subjectivity, and the effects and use of language, acknowledges plurality and fluidity in the process, allowing young women to be active agents within the social world, as opposed to objects to be shaped. In this way young women can recognize different standpoints, explore the multiple ways in which femininity is constructed and performed, and develop different ways to understand themselves and their worlds (Keddie, 2005).

Feminist scholars have continued to study girls' lives with this poststructural lens in place. A number of studies have examined the gender subjectivities of high achieving girls in schools. One such study by Renold and Allan (2006) was concerned with the tensions and contradictions with which girls are faced in being both bright academically,

and beautiful in the context of achieving a perfect, societally constructed femininity. The authors found that most girls wanted to fit in, rather than stand out; however, there were a few participants who seemed to purposefully construct themselves against the idealized "girly" femininity. A key point made by Renold and Allan (2006) is that traditional femininities are being undone and, at the same time, rearticulated, as girls take up and transform a range of masculine and feminine subject positions, creating more ambivalent gendered identities. More recently, and in a Canadian context, Pomerantz and Raby (2011) explored how adolescent girls understood being "smart" and performed academic identities. The girls in their study performed their identities as academically smart girls who attributed their success, and lack of success, to inherent skill and hard work as opposed to structural conditions. The girls in this study also downplayed their intelligence; a trend similarly noted by Dentith (2008) in her study with secondary school girls enrolled in advanced placement courses for mathematics, science, and computer programming.

While some scholars have focused on girls' academic identities, others have examined the ways in which emotions are gendered and how these emotions produce a gendered subjectivity. Again, using school as a site for research, Way's (2013) recent study examined the emotional socialization of young girls in an elementary after school program designed to improve the self-image and agency of elementary school girls through physical activity. This study yielded two key findings: girls were coached to push aside negative emotions such as frustration, and were strongly encouraged to show excitement for their peers, but not for themselves. When girls expressed emotions of frustration, coaches worked to manage their expressions of non-normative emotions,

23

redirecting the perceived negativity, and ultimately sending the message that the emotions being displayed were inappropriate. Way (2013) concluded with a central argument that girls must be taught how to recognize their own strengths and be encouraged to express a range of emotions, without tying these emotions to a gendered identity.

Similar to Way's (2013) research and its focus on displaying emotions connected to subjectivity, but also concerned with whether such displays were also a form of agency, was Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz's (2007) study. Responding to much research that has historically portrayed girls as passive, Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz (2007) sought to connect agency to subjectivity, giving primacy to girls' senses of self and capacities. Specifically, their study explored girls' relational aggression within a Canadian school context, or what many of the participants referred to as "meanness." Focusing on the concepts of group affiliations, and the ways in which peer groups, as collectives, sustain discourses that orchestrate interpersonal interaction, the authors argue that through these discourses, adolescent girls make sense of their world, and their place in it. Notions of ridicule, name-calling, gossip, and silent treatment all surface in this study and are analyzed as locating girls in a gendered economy, where an emphasized femininity of being pretty and skinny to win male attention is the currency. Currie and Kelly (2006) maintain that discourses requiring girls to be feminine and competitive both shape and limit girls' agency. In line with the essence of Gilligan's (2013), *Joining the Resistance*, Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz (2007) claim that this duplicity silences girls, as they must set aside their authentic selves to become what culture values.

Rural Girls

In turning to look at rural adolescent girls, it is important to remember that rural young people, in general, are often constructed in the literature as the binary opposite of a diverse, dynamic and evolving urban youth population. Research positions rural youth as marginalized others who are socially and culturally deficient and even "stuck in time." Seaton's (2007) research expands on this point by suggesting that the construction of young women's subjectivities, in particular, can be shaped by the negative stigmas and judgments that are often attached to being raised in rural settings. Seaton goes on to suggest that these characterizations are often coupled with gendered expectations about how adolescent females should act, a dangerous combination for young women in search of themselves.

Morris (2008) points out that previous studies of the lives of young women in disadvantaged circumstances have focused mainly on minority students in urban settings; consequently, there is a need to explore similar questions about young women in so called "disadvantaged" rural areas by asking how gender shapes their life experiences. For example, rural communities are often located in physically isolated regions that have restricted access to health care, education and counselling (Hornosty & Doherty, 2003). This creates difficulties for rural young women seeking help for problems they may face such as sexual abuse and violence (Varpalotai, 2005). Blake and Nurse (2003) have found that geographic and economic barriers, as well as the surveillance that is part of living in close-knit rural communities, can impede young women's access to supportive adults in social services and health care, making it more difficult for young women in rural communities to report abuse or leave abusive relationships.

It is also the case that in an already complicated time in their lives, adolescent girls in rural communities may face not only inadequate social resources, but restricted opportunities for social connections and a limited range of adult role models (Hornosty & Doherty, 2003). Jiwani (1998) claims that life choices and the ability to exercise agency may be further limited for rural girls as they are often subject to the traditional norms in the family around marriage and childcare, and patriarchal attitudes that devalue and objectify women. However, through her comments, Jiwani demonstrates how easy it is to fall into the trap of binaries. By seeing rural as different from urban, and by assuming that these same realities of traditional norms and patriarchal attitudes do not exist for girls growing up urban, she illustrates why we need to explore the lives of rural girls more fully in order to avoid the stereotypes of the rural, simplistic analyses of the problems, and flawed solutions.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the following chapter I discuss my methodology and explain how I conducted my research. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 focus on my findings and data analysis. Chapter 3 explores some of the issues pertaining to girls' lives, at large, discussing significant factors that influence the girls' forming subjectivities, including relationships with their mothers and mother figures, and their negotiations of mass media. Chapters 4 and 5 build upon and add to this discussion, also taking into account the premise that place matters, and focusing on issues specific to growing up as young women in a rural community. And finally, in chapter 6, I examine what the girls told me about their learning

experiences as a result of participating in this study, give voice to the messages they wished to convey, explore the implications of this research and offer suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2
Methodology

Ethnographic research allows for the investigation of the complex relationship between social structures and human agency without resorting to a deterministic or reductionist analysis of the data (Peirce, 1995). For this reason, I chose ethnographic methods in order to focus on the actualities of the day-to-day lives of the rural young women under specific conditions and situations and fully recognize the young women as competent practitioners of their everyday worlds (Smith, 1987).

On Ethnographic Approaches to Research

As noted in Chapter 1, three research questions provide a frame for my study of girls living in a rural community in Ontario's near north: (1) How do young women growing up in rural, near north Ontario come to understand their world and their place within it? (2) How does their consciousness of life's possibilities and limitations develop? (3) How does this "knowing" shape their willingness to exercise agency and direct their own lives? My interest, then, is in understanding rural girls' lives in context and to do this I employ the tools and approaches of ethnographic research.

As Pole and Morrison (2003) observe, ethnographers focus on a discrete location, are concerned with a full range of social behaviours in that location, and emphasize understanding such behaviours in the context of that location. In this respect, the concept of place is at the forefront of ethnographic research, making the use of its methods particularly effective for my purposes. Pole and Morrison go on to argue that the strength of ethnography is in its ability to hold on to the important details of place, while still

engaging with issues that go beyond the discrete, thus enabling us to view knowledge as part of a wider social context. Further to this, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) identify four central features of ethnographic research that apply to my study: a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a specific social phenomenon; conducting an in-depth study with a small number of participants; a primary focus on working with unstructured data; and data analysis that entails explicit interpretations of the meanings and functions of participants' actions. Finally, Madison (2011) makes the important point that *critical* ethnography encompasses the empirical basis of ethnography as well as the political features of a critical theoretical stance in its aim to reveal how the subtle and implicit nature of power relations affect people's lives and the production of culture.

Critical ethnographers generate understandings of culture through their interpretations of the research participants' standpoints. The emphasis in this process is on allowing critical categories and meanings to emerge from the ethnographic encounter (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007). While acknowledging that positivists often criticize the inductive nature of ethnography and claim it lacks rigour in data collection and analysis, Scott and Morrison (2006) point out that ethnographers are interested in understanding human experiences and do not set out to produce findings that are generalizable or easily replicated. In fact, Richardson (1992) observes that ethnographic projects attach the researcher to other real human beings in deeply human ways, followed by the researcher authoring the "true" texts of the lives of her participants.

At the same time, dynamics of power influence how problems are defined, which knowers are given credibility, how interactions during the research process are interpreted, and how the ethnographic narrative is constructed. Feminist researchers argue

that being self-conscious about the ways in which power is reproduced will enrich ethnographic accounts, particularly when combined with the insights of feminist standpoint theory. More specifically, Naples (2000) observes that many studies of rural communities tend to rely on informants who are influential or powerful. She argues that while community leaders provide particular insights, we might develop deeper understandings of the complexities of rural communities by listening to women and other marginalized groups.

Situating the Researcher

Nearly two decades after graduating from a rural high school and being raised in a rural community, I returned to the same school and community to conduct this research. While it was my intention to conduct my research in this school district because I thought my knowledge of it would ease my ability to access the research site, I did not expect to find myself back in the very school I had attended in my youth. However, in meeting the requirements of the school board's ethics approval process, which identified schools where I could conduct the research, provided the principal agreed, this is what happened. This coincidence, of course, immediately raised methodological questions about insider and outsider status.

A highly contested debate in ethnographic literature has been whether or not insider status is more advantageous than outsider status. Insider research refers to researchers conducting research with groups of which they are also members (Kanuha, 2000). While it had been more than 15 years since I lived in this particular community

30

and I am not a young woman in high school, I am still an insider of the community at large, tied by friends, family and former work positions. Furthermore, I share an identity, language, and experiential base with my participants, all of which are characteristics of insider research (Asselin, 2003). The participants were aware that I was raised in this community and had attended their high school as a young woman, and it was apparent to me that this knowledge of a common ground created conditions in which the girls were more willing to share their experiences with me. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) point out, acceptance is a key benefit to being seen as an insider, and this membership provides a level of trust and openness that would likely not have been afforded otherwise. Further to this, having grown up in this community and having attended high school at the research site allowed me to more easily understand cultural beliefs and practices. As participants referenced various spaces and places within the community, particularly in the photo-voice interviews, I was able to visualize their surroundings having frequented these same places and spaces myself.

While advocates for insider research emphasize the researcher's ability to gain acceptance and deeper understanding based on her/his own experiences, arguments are also made about the strengths and preferability of research by outsiders. Advocates of such research suggest that outsiders can be more objective in observing and analyzing social contexts and cultural beliefs (Bridges, 2001). Furthermore, some scholars question whether or not having a shared status with the research participants may impede the research process given the possibility of participants assuming similarity and understanding, thus failing to fully explain their experiences (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

I recognize the advantages and shortcomings of both insider and outsider status as a researcher; however, I agree with Naples (1996) who argues that, from a feminist standpoint, this static construction of an insider/outsider binary should be called into question because it is overly simplistic. Fay (1996) concurs and argues for a dialectical approach that both recognizes and allows for the preservation of the complexity of similarities and differences. I considered myself to be both an insider and an outsider as I conducted my research. I did not understand my partial membership with the research participant group as denoting sameness or complete inclusiveness. Likewise, I did not view my role as a researcher as denoting complete difference or separation. While it is likely that I gained the acceptance and trust of my participants quickly as a result of some shared ground, I remained fully aware of the fluid and complex nature of human experience and made no assumptions of shared life histories or experiences based on our commonalities. My goal, regardless of any perceived insider and/or outsider status, was not to project my history, experiences, or beliefs on to my participants, but rather to interpret their perspectives, as they were reflected to me, through my own perspective.

Research Site

My research was conducted in a community and secondary school located in a rural region of Ontario's near north. To protect the anonymity of the research site, I call the region Nature Valley. The three most populous towns within the region are referred to as Spring Creek, which is the specific research site, Riverside, and Bay Lake. The population of the community of Spring Creek is under ten thousand people, with a large

proportion living in more isolated areas of up to a thirty-minute drive from the town centre. The community itself is a two-hour drive from the nearest city. As part of the overall research process, I chose to move back to and live in the community for a year to re-immerse myself in the daily life and culture of a rural community.

The school district covers a vast geographical area encompassing three municipalities. There are three secondary schools in this particular municipality, but the research participants all attended Spring Creek Secondary School. This school is located in the town's centre and has an enrolment of approximately three hundred students drawn from four elementary feeder schools housing students from junior kindergarten to grade eight: two in town, and two in surrounding areas. The elementary schools in town have an average student population of about three hundred, and those on the outskirts, an average student population of about one hundred and fifty.

The secondary school employs twenty-eight teachers, six educational assistants, and three secretaries. Nearly all of the student body is white. The central element of difference can be seen as a rudimentary distinction between those students living in town and the "country kids" who are bussed in from a number of surrounding areas that are considered part of the community and are accounted for in the total population of the region. While the school offers a number of extra-curricular activities in the areas of sports, music and clubs, these often take place after school hours. This makes it difficult at times for the "country kids" to get involved as they often have no way of getting to and from the town centre, aside from the school bus.

Recruiting Participants

Female students, grades nine through twelve, were recruited by advertising the study in high volume areas of the local secondary school such as the guidance office and girls' washrooms (see Appendix A for a copy of the poster). Within the first week of advertising, I had seven girls contact me via email volunteering to participate, after which, I met with each of the girls individually. The purpose of this initial meeting was to provide the girls with a more detailed explanation of the research activities, particularly regarding the photo-voice activity, and to give the girls an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification prior to committing to participate. After our meetings, each young woman indicated she was still interested in participating and was then given a letter of information and a consent form (see Appendix C) to be signed by her parent or guardian.

Of the seven girls who volunteered and who participated in this study, two were in grade ten, two in grade eleven, and three in grade twelve. Thus the girls were evenly dispersed across the senior grades. After conducting the first set of individual interviews it became clear that the girls also were representative of what diversity there is in this school with regards to their family backgrounds, interests, experiences, and residency in town, farm and country areas of the community. Furthermore, while five of the girls were born and raised in this rural area, two had moved from more urban areas at different stages of their lives, and thus were able to offer a more comparative perspective on life in a small town.

Data Collection

In keeping with ethnographic study, I collected qualitative data through four semi-structured interviews with each participant, four focus groups and photo-voice methods over a four-month period. Because it is important that ethnographic data be collected in a variety of settings to capture a wide range of behaviors and social interactions, I participated in the girls' activities outside of the daily school setting, including attending a dance recital and graduation ceremony. For ethical reasons and concerns about privacy, the school district did not give me permission to conduct observations within the school.

I interviewed each young woman individually for approximately one hour every two to three weeks. The majority of the interviews were in a private room in the school's guidance office. On a few occasions this room was unavailable as either the school nurse or counselors were using it, in which cases the interviews took place in a private seminar room in the library. The school's principal and secretaries were extremely helpful in providing me information about the availability of each space well in advance of my planned interviews dates. This allowed me to arrange for meeting times and places with the participants in an organized manner. The organization of these pre-arranged meeting times and spaces also aided in protecting the anonymity of the participants, as it allowed me to arrive early to the scheduled room to meet the girls there, rather than meet in a more public, central spot in the school.

Before beginning the recorded or formal portion of the interviews (and focus group session), I greeted the young women and inquired about how they were doing and anything that was new or exciting since the last time we spoke. As I got to know the girls,

35

I would also ask about specific events during this time that I knew they were attending, such as dance competitions, concerts, and get-togethers with friends. These informal conversations provided me with details about their daily lives that, at the end of each interview after the girls had departed, I recorded in my research journal. These informal conversations also allowed for a sense of comfort to develop between the participants and myself, eliminating an "all-business" approach, and helping establish rapport.

Establishing rapport is an essential component of any interview according to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), and this is especially the case with my research as I asked the young women to trust me when sharing their personal experiences, stories and thoughts. The semi-structured interviews, which were digitally recorded and transcribed by me, consisted of open-ended questions about how the girls understand themselves as they grow up rural, if and how this understanding contributes to their consciousness of limits and possibilities, and how this understanding translates into agency and self-direction. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the exploration of the girls' experiences, opinions and perspectives and allowed me to probe for further information or clarification of comments. I chose to use semi-structured interviews because, as Seidman (2012) notes, they are well suited for the exploration of a person's thoughts, behaviors, perceptions and opinions regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues.

As a feminist scholar, it is important for me to acknowledge my awareness of the power dynamics that can be present during individual interviews. I am aware of the social differences and roles that shape the research process, and acknowledge that power differentials were at work and that the act of interviewing can be invasive. I was considerate of the way I presented myself, both in dress, and character. Rather than

dressing more formally, as I typically would have when entering a school as a teacher, I chose to dress casually in hopes of creating a more comfortable dynamic. As the participants and I got to know one another over time, I began each meeting with informal conversation connected to events happening in the girls' lives before I began the more formal interview that I recorded. Further to this, I closed each interview by asking if there was anything else the participants would like to add. Oftentimes, there was. I wanted the focus to be on the girls' voices and what was important to them, not on the questions I had created.

In my role as the researcher, reflexivity became essential, as did the awareness that these in-depth interviews were being used as a method to co-construct meanings with the young women by reconstructing perceptions of events and experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews and focus groups took place at the school during regular hours, providing a familiar environment for the young women who participated.

The order of and way in which interview questions are posed can determine comfort level and affect the level of invasiveness felt by the interviewee. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggest beginning with questions that are less difficult or contentious, as a way of building confidence and trust, before moving to more difficult questions. These authors also suggest beginning interview questions with the phrase "tell me about" as a way of eliminating questions that are too complicated, detailed or difficult to answer. Such an approach also allows the interviewees to take the question in several directions, leaving room for ideas and concepts to emerge that may not have been considered by the interviewer. For example, I asked the young women to "tell me about" what it is like to go to school in a rural community, rather than asking more closed questions such as, "do

you like going to school in this rural community?" Not only did my questioning strategy prevent stunted yes or no answers, it allowed the young women to describe how they felt about their experiences in a manner that was highly personalized, providing rich contextual data.

After completing each of the initial seven interviews, I began with the first of a series of four focus group sessions, which were also digitally recorded and transcribed by me. All four of the focus group sessions were held in the same classroom, a space that was also arranged by the school's principal and secretaries. Three sessions occurred after school, and one was conducted at lunch. The scheduling of the focus group sessions depended on the girls' work and extra-curricular commitments. Before each focus group session, I arrived to the classroom early to rearrange the furniture. Specifically, I pushed the desks and tables up against the walls and created an open space where I placed chairs in a circular formation. I wanted to create an open space where all of the participants could see and hear one another, a space conducive to communicating.

Of the seven participants, five chose to participate in the focus group sessions. With respect to the two girls who chose not to participate, I spent time in subsequent individual interviews asking each girl questions that arose in the focus group discussions. Not only did I want to make sure they had opportunities to share their opinions and insights, I also wanted to be transparent about what was discussed, and make them feel included in the study as a whole.

The questions in the focus groups were open-ended and designed to promote group discussion. While I had selected four topics for our focus group discussions, I felt it was important to understand what topics were important to the girls and would be of

interest for subsequent discussions in our group meetings. After the first focus group session I asked the girls what topics they would like to discuss and they eagerly came up with a list. As there were more topics than remaining focus group meetings, I also asked the girls to decide as a group which topics would be best grouped together.

The focus group sessions were not used as a short cut to gather individual data from all of the young women at the same time; rather, they were used to build on, explore and clarify the girls' perspectives and standpoints in ways that may have been less accessible in the individual interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Focus group sessions allowed the young women to build on one another's responses, and in turn, generated more critical responses than the individual interview alone (Kitzinger, 1995). Montell (1999) believes that focus groups are especially useful in providing qualitative information as they combine many of the advantages of participant observation with those of in-depth individual interviewing, while avoiding some of the limitations of these latter methods.

To enrich the interview and focus group data, I also used photo-voice as a method for capturing data about the girls' lives. The photo-voice activities were the focus of my third individual interview with each young woman. I wanted to ensure the young women had enough time to gather their photographs, as well as to have the opportunity to follow up with them about their photo-voice narratives in our fourth and final interviews. The purpose of this activity was to have the girls take photographs of places that are meaningful to them, and then, in a follow-up individual interview, to discuss the significance of those photographs with me. Given the importance of rural as a place in the lives of these young women, the photographic narratives provided further insight into

their perspectives on growing up rural, and also provided me access to places and spaces that I would not have otherwise had. I explicitly directed the girls to exclude other people from their photographs to avoid the ethical concerns that could arise from capturing images without approval. A group meeting with all of the young women involved took place to discuss these guidelines, ethical considerations and the objectives of this activity. I offered to provide each of the girls with a disposable camera; however, each young woman had access to and preferred to use her own personal camera.

Photo-voice is a participatory research method that allows participants to use photographic images to represent their experiences and express their points of view, which are then described in an oral narrative (Goodhart et al., 2006). According to Wang (1999), when applied to gender issues, photo-voice poses an alternative to positivist ways of knowing by listening and learning from women's own portrayals of their lives. Research has also shown that this method is particularly effective when working with young people. Strack, Magill and McDonagh (2004) argue that the photo-voice method has great potential for enhancing youth empowerment and informing policy. Further to this, they state that this method is especially appropriate for younger adolescents who are beginning to formulate notions of the self and place in the larger context of society. In these respects, using photo-voice to further explore the lives, experiences and perspectives of rural young women was an appropriate and effective method for my research.

I acknowledge here that photography is a political process because of the decisions made by the photographer about what to make or not make visible. Photography is also a cultural process in that institutionalized conventions which differ

40

by genre – such as family, or tourist photography, for example - channel the form and content across time and space (Packard, 2008). While the power of participant-generated photography arguably is in its production of a different kind of data from those generated using researcher-led methods, allowing for the inclusion of data that might otherwise have been overlooked by, or even invisible to researchers (Guillemin & Drew, 2010), in this study, using photo-voice, the young women produced photographs for a specific audience, the researcher. It seems unlikely that choices about content and form can be understood as existing outside this social relationship (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). However, returning to previous discussions of the benefits of insider research, the girls were aware that I was raised and schooled in their local community, likely assumed a collective habitus and a familiarity with all aspects of the spatial surroundings, beautiful, or not. Knowing this, I would argue that their photographic narratives were not meant to create a one-dimensional representation of place, covering up less desirable characteristics, nor were they exaggerated as a means of "selling me" on the value of their place as if I were a potential tourist.

The qualitative data resulting from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and the photo-voice activity revealed the individual stories of how young women experience growing up rural from their unique standpoints; specifically, it addressed the three research questions by focusing on their forming subjectivities and the agency of these young women. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis must conform to standards of qualitative rigor, which is commonly referred to as "trustworthiness" in this paradigm of inquiry (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008). To ensure rigor as I collected and analyzed my data, I used member checks while coding and confirmed

41

interpretations with participants on an ongoing basis throughout the duration of the research (Creswell, 2007). More specifically, I transcribed each interview and focus group session before moving on to the next. This allowed me to note any follow-up questions, as well as points of discussion that required further clarification. I would often read the girls' own quotes from previous meetings back to them in subsequent individual interviews and ask them to further explain what they meant.

According to Lincoln (2002), to ensure standards of evidence in qualitative research are met, the researcher should have been deeply involved and closely connected to the research scene, something my insider status helped support. As previously stated, I recognize my interpretive role and personal standpoint in this research inquiry and the co-creation of meaning that occurred, and I made every effort to ensure that the analysis is a fair representation of the young women's voices and experiences, rather than my own. Clearly discussing the process of interpretation with the young women increased the transparency or trustworthiness of the data, highlighted the evidence and alternative interpretations that serve as a warrant for each claim, and provided contextual explanations (Denzin, 2009).

Data Analysis

My data consists of the following: a research journal that I used to note observations, informal conversations, thoughts, and questions throughout the duration of the study; transcriptions of interviews and focus groups sessions, which were completed by me; and digital copies of photographs, varying in number, from each participant.

My data analysis consisted of a three-fold approach, which I will refer to as pre-coding, descriptive coding, and thematic coding. In the pre-coding stage, my analysis began as I started interviewing. After conducting my first round of interviews, I began to see patterns within those interviews. I looked for responses that spoke to my research questions as well as connections to the reading I did before embarking on this study. I had previous interviews in mind as I conducted subsequent interviews and focus group sessions. I adapted my questions throughout the research process to ask additional individualized questions about the concepts and ideas that were emerging as important during earlier meetings. During this pre-coding stage, I also analyzed data as I prepared transcriptions immediately following each individual interview and focus group session, to confirm interpretations with participants in subsequent meetings, and to prepare any additional questions.

After completing each transcription, I listened to the digital recording again, while reading the text I had prepared. This allowed me to listen to what was said in a more fluid manner than the "start and stop" manner required while transcribing. As I completed my transcriptions, I noted, of course, "what" was said, but also "how" it was said. For example, if a participant's comment was clearly sarcastic, I noted this. Because I completed the transcriptions myself, and as immediately as possible after each meeting, I was able to recall nuances such as body language to provide richer context to our conversations and also made note of them.

After completing the transcriptions, I began descriptive coding. It had been more than four months between completing my first and my final transcription, and I needed to go back and familiarize myself with "what" the data said before I could begin to analyze

the possibilities of "why". My descriptive coding produced three broad categories: experiencing girlhood, experiencing small town culture, and experiencing girlhood in a small town. I note here that while the term "girlhood" is often understood theoretically, as a social construct, we also tend to use it more loosely in everyday language as a descriptor of a time or period of life, and so which usage is in play must be deduced from the context.

Following my descriptive coding, which presented results focusing on the girls' experiences, I began to code thematically, first, identifying themes that, again, characterize the participants' experiences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). A number of other themes began to emerge including the influences of social media on being a girl, the feeling of a need for feminism, the importance of place in understanding one's self and her world, and the escape to nature as a strategy for dealing with challenges and pressures. Borrowing from grounded theory, I also used what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call the constant comparison method, as I compared data from the same participant, as well as from different participants, looking for similarities and differences. While doing so, I also used in vivo coding. In vivo coding uses the participants' words to generate patterns and themes and prioritizes and honors the participants' voices by using their words and phrases in the coding process (Saldana, 2009).

Finally, I note here my awareness that my background research and research questions guided me, in part, towards the themes I identified. While they are not the only themes in the data, they are important insights into what these girls said about how they understand themselves and their worlds, and their experiences in a rural community and school.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are a part of the everyday practice of doing research, and there are several issues that must be considered prior to commencement (Guilleman & Gillam, 2004). In broader methodological terms, researchers need to think carefully about the standpoint from which they are studying young people and the ethical implications of that standpoint (Morrow & Richards, 1996). Most importantly, researchers need to be aware that their primary responsibility as adults to young people is to ensure that no harm is done at any stage in the research process (Grover, 2003).

Data were collected by way of digital audio recordings of both interviews and focus groups, and photo-voice narratives. To ensure the anonymity of the young women in the written research findings, they each chose a pseudonym to be used for all of the data collection and analysis. In addition, the identity of the school, school board, and region where the research occurred is being suppressed.

However, I was aware that adhering to my legal and professional duty to report abuse might compromise the anonymity of the young women. Given the personal nature of the interview, focus group, and photo-voice narratives that would occur, I was sensitive to the possibility that the young women might disclose instances of a harmful nature such as sexual or physical abuse. In the letter of informed consent, it was made clear to both the young women and their legal guardians that should these disclosures occur, I was obligated to report them to the necessary school or social welfare officials. In this respect, I could not guarantee the young women's anonymity.

While the individual interviews and photo-voice activities occurred in a one-on-one setting between myself and each young woman, participation in the focus group sessions was more interactive in that each young woman's input existed within the greater social context of the group, and, in this respect, confidentiality of disclosure could not be guaranteed. I requested that the girls refrain from sharing what was discussed in these sessions with those outside of the group and emphasized the importance of confidentiality, but also recognized that I had limited control in this regard. I ensured that the girls were aware of the potential for outside disclosure by peers prior to beginning the focus groups.

Chapter 3
Girls' Identities: Letting Go and Holding On

The following chapter outlines how the girls in this study negotiate their forming subjectivities in the context of girlhood at large and addresses the question of how girls develop an understanding of themselves and their worlds. In terms of growing up female, the girls in this study felt that certain aspects and challenges of girlhood were applicable to all young women, whether urban or rural, while other aspects applied specifically to "small town girls." It is the girls' understanding of those greater issues and challenges and how those affect their forming subjectivities that will be presented in this chapter. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss issues specific to growing up as young women in a rural community, or, as the girls in this study would describe it, being a "small town girl." In this chapter I begin by discussing the ways in which the girls both shed and retain parts of their identities as they move through self-identified transitional periods in their lives. Central to this part of the discussion is the identified importance of female role models, particularly mother figures. Following this, I outline how media culture contributes to the girls' understanding of themselves and their worlds.

Shedding Identities

As Simone de Beauvoir (1974) suggests, "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman" (p. 301). Not only does this statement mark the distinction between sex and gender, more importantly, it suggests that gender is an aspect of one's identity that is acquired over time and experience. The past two decades of feminist research have seen a

shift from humanist conceptions of identity to post-structuralist conceptions of identity, more commonly referred to as subjectivity. According to Weedon (1987), subjectivity is made up of the conscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to her world. I will use the terms identity and subjectivity interchangeably; however, it is these post-structural tenets of identity/subjectivity that define my understanding and use of the terms. Namely, from this perspective, the young women's subjectivities can be understood as multiple and fluid, offering opportunities for change and agency.

The girls in this study often spoke of their past selves as they described current understandings of themselves and the social relations of their worlds. Implicit in their discussions are a changing subjectivity and habitus as a result of moving through different fields and negotiating the forms of capital that are most prominent in each field. For example, the three grade twelve girls marked a shift in their identity from who they "were" in grades nine and ten, to who they "are" now. More specifically, and more consistently across the current grade levels of all participants, the girls identified the transition between who they "were" in grades six, seven and eight, and who they "became" in grade nine as a significant shift in their forming subjectivities.

After completing the first round of individual interviews, I conducted the first focus group session. As a way to privilege the girls' voices, at the end of this session I asked the girls what topics they felt were important, and wanted to discuss in future group meetings and got these responses.

48

Megan: I think today was pretty good. We just kinda started on one question and it just kinda branched off.

Stella: I feel like I could talk a lot about like, changing from like, grade six-seven-eight to grade twelve.

Jessica: Yeah!

Sarah: Yeah!

Megan: Yeah, me too.

Stella: I could talk about that for hours probably.

Sarah: Social media, like, how it affects us.

Megan: Trends and fads would be kinda cool to talk about.

Sarah: And maybe like, comparing different ways you grew up, how it's different in small towns, like stigmas or growing up, or like, if someone grew up culturally different. Comparing between us.

Stella: Maybe if everyone's comfortable sharing, maybe like family settings and stuff.

Jessica: Maybe also how we influence other girls and how we look up to other people too.

As the dialogue shows, the girls came up with a number of topics that they felt were important and wanted to talk about, all of which will be discussed in various sections of this dissertation, but the focus here is on transitioning from pre-adolescence to, and through, adolescence to adulthood. As Stella suggested, and other girls enthusiastically agreed, there is a retrospective awareness of the changing self over time. Driscoll (2002) notes that the notion of "self" as the knowing center of the world has become a critical

point of analysis for theorists, including feminist theorists, during the past several decades. And while Driscoll also points out that womanhood is presumed to be the end point of a naturalized process of developing individual identity that relegates a vast range of roles and behaviors to its immature past, the girls in this study suggest that this same naturalized process occurs as they transition between the spaces of pre-adolescence and adolescence.

As Julie and I began our third individual interview, which focused on the photo-voice activity, she started by showing me this, her first of three photos.

Figure 1: Childhood Beach

As we sat together, Julie staring at the photo on the computer screen, and I, shifting my attention between the photograph and her sombre demeanor, Julie told me about the great memories she had of being here with her family when she was younger and she described family picnics with her brothers and father. However, she follows this pleasant, nostalgic narrative up by changing her focus to the present: "I went there this weekend and it didn't feel the same to me anymore. I didn't feel excited to go and I didn't feel the same as I did when I was a kid. I feel like it just kinda went away. It's sad that something so important to you can just go away." Julie's now disappointed reaction to a place that once elicited excitement and held importance to her at a younger age suggests an unwanted loss of the simpler times of her pre-adolescent years. Her narrative sets the stage for a more widely felt sense of change and transition.

As the girls recalled their younger years while articulating their current understandings of themselves and what it means to be a girl, many did not reflect on their former selves fondly. They spoke of parts of their grades six, seven, and eight identities that they were happy to shed. About half way through our second individual interview, Megan, a grade eleven student at the time, was explaining her "sassy" personality as part of reflecting back on her pre-adolescent days.

> Like before, in grade seven and eight and stuff, I was really hyper and really annoying and I regret anyone knowing me in those grades. I don't know, like in grade seven and eight I would put real Dollar Store fine glitter, not even actual eye shadow, and like put it here [pointing to her eyelids] and wear it. It's so

embarrassing. I've got like pictures and I just want to delete them off the face of the planet.

Megan's statement of regret and embarrassment suggests both a post-structural awareness of her fluid and changing subjectivity, although only in hindsight, and a strong desire to shed parts of, or even completely "delete" or erase, her tween identity. To use Bourdieusian terms, Megan points to a changing habitus that is marked by a transition from the field of elementary school to that of secondary school. Her narrative of regret and shame in relation to her younger self begs questions around her current subjectivity. To what degree, if at all, do these feelings affect her current understanding of herself? And to what degree, if at all, do these feelings impede a current fashioning of a new subjectivity? It is argued that female adolescence is a set of discourses on self-monitoring, or, analyzing one's self in relation to others (Raby, 2010); however, as Megan and other girls in the study suggested, equally as important to analyzing one's self in relation to others is analyzing one's self in relation to former, temporary understandings of self.

Like Megan, Jessica, a grade twelve student, also expressed some disdain as she reflected on her fourteen year old self. During our third individual interview, Jessica explained what she felt were the greatest pressures in her life currently, and how those pressures had changed throughout the course of her high school experiences. She identified a shift from her early adolescent years, when the social capital of having a boyfriend was at the forefront, to her later adolescence when the attainment of institutionalized cultural and symbolic capital by way of receiving good grades in school marked the transition to womanhood.

52

School for me is the most prominent pressure and I don't really feel pressure to have a boyfriend or anything. I think when girls are in grade nine they like, they wanna get a boyfriend cause they're just in high school. I've gotten to learn that you don't need to have a boyfriend. It's not like a defining thing for you. But definitely in grade nine I was like, "I wanna have a boyfriend" cause everyone else had a boyfriend and it was like, great. They were all happy and there I was like, "I don't have a boyfriend" [laughing]. But I was in grade nine. I was like, fourteen. Now I look back and I'm like, "Ew."

Like Megan, Jessica refers to aspects of her younger self in a less than complimentary manner. While Megan expressed regret and shame when reflecting on aspects of her pre-adolescent identity, Jessica expressed some dismay about her earlier adolescent desire to have a boyfriend. Of course, acquiring such social capital can be read as denoting a desire to belong, as Pomeratnz (2008) points out. Developing a sense of themselves, as well as a sense of belonging is a substantial concern for pre and early adolescent girls. Be it wearing glittery eye shadow in an attempt to sport the latest trend, or having a boyfriend, the narratives illustrate how girls try various methods to fit into the world in which they find themselves. In doing so, they shed their earlier identities and find themselves at what Brown and Gilligan (1992) have called "the crossroads," a place of danger where their voices may be silenced or lost.

Sarah, a grade twelve student, told me about some of her experiences throughout her pre-adolescent and adolescent years, and how those experiences have shaped her

understanding of what it means to be a girl. She also highlighted this transitional time in her life and revealed a rather sophisticated understanding of how the structures within her habitus work to suppress her agency as a young woman.

> I've found like, a lot of little kids don't really care if they're a guy or a girl. They kind of accept each other and I think like, we should start learning from them. Cause like, I don't know what time it happens, maybe when we're like eleven or twelve, people start to downplay girls and like, you know, kind of up-play guys. Like, people always say like, 'Oh, girls should start wearing makeup to impress boys. Or they should start doing or wearing this fashion trend to impress boys" so I feel like, growing up and looking back at it now, everyone's saying like, "You should be doing this to impress boys." That's the end result.

Sarah suggested that it is only after "growing up and looking back" at her younger self that she developed an awareness of societal messages and their influence on her understanding of herself in relation to the world. Her observation that it is in pre-adolescence that "people" start to "downplay girls and up-play guys" offers a forthright, grounded analysis that is reflected in the research of scholars such as Gilligan (1982; 2013) and her colleagues.

Sarah's narrative also offers a lament for the simpler, more carefree days of childhood, suggesting that, as much of the literature supports, adolescence is a particularly precarious time for girls (Pipher, 1994) as they face a number of familial, social and school-related pressures, alongside a continual negotiation of forming

subjectivities. One such identity that is a common occurrence in girlhood, often associated with this carefree nature, is that of the tomboy (Carr, 1998). While tomboy identities are often ambiguous and, like most girls' identities, complex, and non-uniform, Morgan (1998) suggests that the sense of assertiveness and self-reliance that is often associated with tomboy traits may have positive outcomes for girls. This is arguably the case with June, a grade ten student, and self-proclaimed former tomboy. On several occasions during my discussions with June, she attributed her sense of assertiveness, her lack of a fear of confrontation, and her overall agency to having grown up with brothers, and having mostly male friends.

> I don't know, I feel like, it's probably just me, but like, I have a lot of guys in my family and I was a really big tomboy, so when it comes to people having issues with me I don't take it like, "Oh my god, I'm going to get the shit kicked out of me" kinda thing. I take it like, "I'll go deal with it then." I'll go stand up for myself. I don't like seeming like a weak link kind of, I guess. I just like, kind of like expressing who I am. Like, I'm not a violent person, but if you have an issue with me I wanna know what it is so I can resolve it with you kind of thing.

After getting to know June over the course of our focus group sessions, the other girls in the study also made reference to June's assertive character traits, ascribing them to the male influences in her life. Sarah, for example, referenced this in our final interview as we discussed her fear of confrontation, a common feeling amongst the girls in the study.

I think girls who are good with confrontation and who are like June, definitely it has a lot to do with how influenced you are by guys and men in your life. Like, she probably has a dad and a lot of close guy friends… I think guys have a huge influence of that on girls. That's probably why June is, which is good for her. I respect people who can do that because I myself cannot.

The girls' beliefs that June is unique in her ability to voice her opinions and demonstrate agentic qualities in the face of conflict supports more than three decades of research suggesting that silence first becomes an issue as girls transition into adolescence (Gilligan, 1982). This silencing refers to both a literal voice, as well as a reluctance to display a subset of emotions associated with anger or displeasure (Gilligan, 2013). Further to this, Way (2013) argues that gender-specific emotions ultimately shape our identity and are at the core of the features that define masculinity and femininity. More specifically, the girls' ascription of June's "good" and "respectable" agentic qualities to the male influences in her life suggests that it is as though voice and agency can most effectively be gained and/or maintained through the process of osmosis via social interactions with male figures. This understanding implies that such qualities are inherently male, further perpetuating an oppressive gender binary where young women who have transitioned out of a more carefree childhood move into positions of weakness, submerging their female voices and emotions.

Although June appears to have maintained her voice and a sense of agency while moving into adolescence, and from the fields of elementary to secondary school, her transition is not one of ease, nor does it entail a sustainability of subjectivity.

56

June: Becoming friends with girls, it took quite a bit of time because like, I was just so used to playing football or running around the field with soccer, getting mud on myself and then like, coming to [high school] and finding friends that are girls, I kind of had to stop horsing around and all that, and just kinda try and fit in. And, I like being a girl [laughs].

Researcher: What do you mean you had to stop horsing around and try to fit in?

June: Most girls are like all, like here, into shopping and trends. Um I think I've mainly seen like the most guy-ish thing a girl do is long-board. Like, my friends, they're, they like mudding and all that, but it's in a truck. With guys, I loved to play sports growing up and with my friends that are girls, I don't think I've ever seen any one of them on a sports team or anything like that. They just are not interested.

Like Julie, Megan, Sarah and Jessica, June referred to a shedding of and resistance to parts of her former self. However, while Megan and Jessica express an explicit sense of relief in having discarded pieces of their former identities, June's reflection on letting go of her once tomboy identity is not one of relief, but rather, of necessity. Research suggests that, in the pre-pubescent stage, tomboy behavior is acceptable because it is understood to be a phase that girls will naturally grow out of around the time of puberty (Martin, 1998), at which point social pressures increase and girls become more aware of a socially constructed gender appropriateness of femininity (Carr, 1998; Paechter, 2010). It is also important to note that girls can position themselves differently in relation to gender discourses according to the peer group context they find themselves in (Reay,

2001). As June transitioned from her peer group in elementary school to that of secondary school, she had to abandon her tomboy identity in order to fit in and forge new friendships with other young women, speaking, once again, to the acquisition of field-specific social and cultural capital that allows for a sense of belonging. Butler (1996) speaks to the consequences of such a compromise of one's subjectivity, suggesting that, in embodying one identity in a particular context, a woman is then also silencing, erasing, or hiding, both to herself and others, other expressions of her identity. Although recent research on the gendered identities of children and girls implies that femininity may have lost some of its rigidity, suggesting that there may now be different ways of being a girl (McRobbie, 2004; Renold, 2005; Paechter, 2010), June's socially forced conformity to a more acceptable display of femininity suggests that there remains a certain level of inflexibility in femininity, complicating and fragmenting young women's understandings of what it means to be a girl.

While the girls once were tasked with fashioning their own sense of young femininity, as they move through time and experience, they resist parts of their former selves and let go of what once was, fashioning a new subjectivity and a resulting awareness of a former self. Cherland (1994), mirroring the essence of feminist standpoint theory, states that women and girls will do gender according to their own life experiences, and further to this, Zaslow (2009) argues that such life experiences determine how individuals negotiate identities in dialogue with social positions and cultural ideologies. Julie, Megan, Jessica, Sarah and June each noted a retrospective awareness of a change in self alongside a movement between the fields of elementary and secondary school. Perhaps it is the simultaneous shift from pre-adolescent to adolescent

58

spaces while also moving from elementary to secondary school fields, and requiring the negotiation and acquisition of social and cultural capital, that makes this transition for girls such a significant one.

Sustaining Identities

As Finders (1997) points out, the female's developing sense of self, or subjectivity, is often organized around making and maintaining affiliations and relationships. One important relationship in a young woman's life is her relationship with her mother. Just as the girls, both voluntarily and involuntarily, faced a remodeling of subjectivities as they shed and resisted aspects of their younger selves, so too did they sustain and embrace aspects of their female identities, which, for a large part, they attributed to their relationships with their mothers, or mother figures. This is not to suggest that the girls' relationships with their mothers did not change over time, as both the girls and their mothers changed, rather that the mother figures in the girls' lives remained a constant influence in their forming subjectivities, not giving way to periods of transition.

Without exception, and without prodding from pre-constructed discussion questions on the topic, all seven girls in this study discussed the importance of their mothers, or mother figures, in relation to understanding themselves, and, sometimes specifically, understanding what it means to be a girl. Noteworthy here are the girls' diverse family upbringings that became clear as I got to know them over the course of our time together. Three of the girls came from two-parent homes; one young woman was

59

raised by her mother and grandparents; one girl was raised by her father from the age of five, after her mother passed away; one young woman was adopted into a two parent family as a child, but, since her adoptive father left, had been raised solely by her mother; and one girl, who came from a particularly troubled home, fraught with abuse and strife, was raised by a number of different family members at different times in her life. The diverse family upbringings and complexities of the girls' experiences within this small group of seven young women create their unique standpoints as daughters; however, they share, at least, one common truth: mothers and/or mother figures, regardless of the statuses of their relationships, play an important role in young women's understandings of themselves and their worlds.

Although my research questions were not directed, specifically, at questions related to mother-daughter relationships, the photo-voice activity proved particularly fruitful in discussions related to this topic. For example, as Jessica, one of the three young women raised in a two-parent home, and I began our photo-voice interview, she directed me to her first photo, which she referred to as "the barn."

Figure 2: The Barn

The barn is the first one. That's like, my childhood one. Cause um, we have horses and I spend a lot of time in the barn with my mom, helping out and feeding the horses and stuff…it just kinda reminds me like, of my childhood and like, I spent a lot of time there helping my mom and stuff. I guess it's kinda like, nostalgic, but I'm not sure. I guess it represents my relationship with my mom and it's something we kinda bond over.

I note here that Jessica referred to this photograph as her "childhood one" because, without any specific instruction to do so, she, and some of the other girls, brought several photos which they organized to represent their past, present, and desired futures, further

highlighting the complex balance of shedding and sustaining subjectivities through lived and imagined, or desired, experiences. Turning to Jessica's discussion of this photograph regarding her mother, her narrative suggested that it is not the specific experience of feeding the horses or the barn itself that resulted in her decision to share this particular photograph with me, but rather, that this space holds significance because of the time she was able to spend here, bonding with her mother. As Jessica continued to talk about her relationship with her mother, explaining how her mother has always supported her decisions, even when Jessica did not follow her advice, Jessica also added the following:

> I definitely like, I'll be doing something and I'll think like, "Wow, my mom does this too." Or like, just little things like, I don't know, I can't really think of any examples. Like certain things that I'll say or things that I do or the way I do things. I notice that a lot of it is similar to what my mom does.

Jessica suggests that she does not consciously imitate her mother; however, it is clear that her mother has influenced a part of Jessica's identity, and that Jessica is aware of this influence. And while Jessica expressed a feeling of surprise, at times, as she discovers the way her own behaviors have been influenced by those of her mother, other girls in the study expressed more conscious imitations of their mothers' identities. For example, in our final individual interview, Stella, a grade twelve student who was also raised in a two-parent home, discussed her desire to have children in the future, and how her relationships with her own family have influenced this desire. She concludes this line of discussion with the following: "I feel like we have really awesome relationships, especially with my mom. Like, we're really close cause we're basically the same person.

Like, we are the exact same." It is evident that Stella's positive relationship with her mother has had a significant influence on the way she views herself. However, her description of herself as a carbon copy of her mother may raise questions around Stella's capacity to develop an autonomous identity since, as O'Reilly (1998) notes, "western culture in general, and normative psychological theory mandates separation from parents in adolescence to enable the emerging adult to achieve an autonomous sense of self" (p. 17). However, in their book, *Mother-Daughter Revolution*, de Bold, Wilson and Malave (1994) question the validity of such developmental theories, suggesting that people do not need to emotionally separate from their mothers to become autonomous, as separation and autonomy are not equivalent. Further to this, the authors echo the girls' narratives of a forced shedding of identity, stating that, as girls enter adolescence and come up against a patriarchal culture, they have to give up parts of themselves to be safe and accepted. de Bold et al. (1994) believe that mothers can aid their daughters in resisting this loss of self.

Even though the mother-daughter relationship has historically been characterized as full of conflict, it is arguably one of the most significant relationships in the lives of girls and young women in that the relationship can significantly influence what a daughter will become as an adult woman (Driscoll, 2002). Julie, a grade ten student whose mother passed away when she was five, demonstrated the potential lasting power of a mother-daughter bond, despite the absence of her mother's physical presence. During our third interview, that included the photo-voice activity, Julie showed me this photograph of her mother's gravesite, and offered the following narrative:

Figure 3: Mother's Gravesite

(photo has been edited to remove name and dates)

So this is my mom's cemetery. Um, it was Mother's Day yesterday so um, my aunt actually went down, and my grandma and my two aunts went down and kinda just saw her and replaced the flowers and stuff like that. I don't know, this place is important to me cause it's like, where I would go to talk to her. I don't really anymore cause of the distance, but yeah, I feel like every time I bring it up, my dad doesn't want to do it. He kinda like, closed that chapter of his life and like, is on to you know, his new girlfriend. But it's a place that I can connect with her.

I cannot say for sure whether it was Julie's sadness, my own sadness, or my inability to know how to proceed during this delicate portion of the interview that prevented me from asking many further questions about this photograph. Julie also told me, however, that she talks to the photograph to connect with her mother. This was not the first time Julie had discussed the loss of her mother with me, but there was something very moving and powerful about her narrative when accompanied by this photograph. In fact, Julie opened up to me in our first interview about the loss of her mother, and talked about how "growing up with a dad when you're a female is hard." And, in our second interview, Julie expanded on these hardships.

> I'd like to have a mom. I mean like, that's kinda really important to me, especially growing up. I don't know. I feel like I need that mom figure in my life. I remember her being like, the sweetest person. Everyone, she was so nice and everyone, like, I've been told, "You're nothing like your mom at all" and like, that hurts cause it's like, I'm not her but I want to be like her. And everyone calls me nice and sweet but like, I'm not *as* nice or *as* sweet as I could be. She could definitely teach me some lessons about being a girl and like, what not to do and what to do kinda thing.

Julie's twice-referencing of the importance of a mother figure while "growing up" speaks to both the theme of significant transitions for girls through tween-hood and adolescence, and suggests that mother figures can provide a unique, female guidance needed throughout young women's lives. Like Stella, Julie also wants to be like her mother;

65

however, while Stella can draw on the presence of her mother as she continually develops an understanding of herself and remodels her expressions of femininity, Julie must negotiate this development in a state of void, based on her memory of her mother's Ophelia-like qualities of being "nice" and "sweet." Julie might look to other prominent female figures in her life, such as teachers, extended family members, and friends, to aid her understanding and development, but she expressed an insistence that the absence of her mother has hampered her sound understanding of "being a girl." Julie's narrative suggests that mothering has a substantial impact on grounding a daughter in gender norms and a feminine history (Edelman, 1994), and that during this complex adolescent period in her life, Julie's motherless circumstances complicate her experiences. In response she attempts to maintain past memories of her mother's personality to create her own present subjectivity.

While Julie was motherless in the literal sense of the word, another young woman, a grade eleven student whose pseudonym will remain unnoted, experienced motherless (and fatherless) periods of her life due to complicated circumstances within her family. I began to learn of these complications early on when, in our first interview together, she disclosed the regular involvement of social welfare services in her life as a result of such complications, and some of the details around the need for these services. Having had little time to build rapport and trust with the young woman at this point, I did not probe further into this situation. However, during this same interview, and those that followed, she continued to disclose the intimate details of her complicated home life. The more we spoke, the more it became clear that her strained relationship with her mother was a significant factor in her troubled life. I was first alerted to both the strain, and the

66

significance of the relationship with her mother when we were nearing the end of our first interview as she explained her most recent living situation in light of her mother having moved in with her boyfriend.

> **Participant**: She just moved back last month. I was living with my grandpa by myself for six months while she moved out, and um, she completely like forgot about me the whole time she was gone.
>
> **Researcher**: What do you mean?
>
> **Participant**: I would text her, and she wouldn't answer me. Nothing. I seen her maybe three or four times the whole time she was gone for six months. She went down to Waterville. It's not very far.

To provide further context, Waterville is a small community approximately five kilometers away from the community in which the young woman was living at the time. Her anger and her disappointment at only having seen her mother a few times over the course of six months, while certainly significant in and of itself, may be even more understandable then, given their close proximity. In addition to her mother's physical absence, this participant noted a feeling of emotional abandonment of feeling forgotten. She also spoke of reaching out for her mother's attention to no avail, suggesting a desire to maintain the relationship and bond with her mother and raising questions around the effects this broken connection with her mother may have on this young woman's sense of self-worth and empowerment.

According to O'Reilly (1998), feminist writers on daughters unanimously maintain that the connection between mother and daughter is essential for young

67

women's empowerment, a theme that is prominent in feminist scholarship on mothers and daughters. O'Reilly (1998) adds that this connection between mother and daughter will empower the daughter only if the mother herself is living a life of agency, authority and autonomy. During our fourth interview, the young woman explained how her favorite country singer "influenced [her] because he thinks that, when he was younger, he thought like, he wasn't good at things. But then like, further down the road he realized that he is good at things, even if people didn't tell him that." She then added:

> My mom kinda influenced me there for a bit before I realized she was doing [unhealthy things]. And then as soon as that, I was like, "Yep, now you no longer influence me." And because it also like, what turned me from the influence from her was due to the fact that she was letting people use her and not controlling her own life. I mean, going down that path that she wants to be in, like being abused even if you love the person, it's not really the best relationship to be in because it's not healthy.

This narrative stands in contrast with O'Reilly's (1998) assertion that daughters can be empowered only by a mother figure who is, herself, empowered, agentic, and autonomous. This suggests that this young woman's own empowerment, agency and autonomy has been bolstered rather than compromised as a result of her searching for these same qualities in her mother and finding a lack. Noteworthy, too, is the commentary preceding that of her perception of her mother's mistakes and shortcomings, explaining why her favorite country singer has influenced her. The content and coupling of these statements suggests that she yearns for reassurance from her mother that she is

"good at things," a supportive connection that may foster a greater sense of empowerment in her life.

As this young woman's troubled home life, in general, along with the inconsistent presence of and strained relationship with her mother became clearer with each interview, I began to wonder if there were any positive female role models in her life. Our photo-voice interview enlightened me in this regard as she spoke of her relationship with her grandmother when she showed me this, her first of three photographs, which she referred to as "The Lake."

Figure 4: The Lake

Participant: The sky was so bad. You didn't see the blue there [pointing to the blue strip of sky in the picture]. You didn't see the sun trying to come through. It was all just this [pointing to the clouds in the picture] until I was in a better mood and then it actually went like that. So it made me feel like my grandmother was there with me and started to try and make my day clear up.

Researcher: Tell me about your relationship with your grandmother.

Participant: My grandmother, we used to be really, really close. I'd go see her all the time. We would knit. We'd do crafts and everything together. She actually taught me how to knit. She taught me how to cook different varieties of meals. And she taught me how to bake. And, uh, so she passed away like seven years ago now and whenever I'm having a bad day or whatever, I will go sit down by the lake. Normally it's a really bad sky and then it just starts going to get better.

Rutter (1996) claims that mothers need to empower their daughters with the feminine experience and secure their daughters' sense of self-worth so that they will not turn away from their mothers, or themselves. This young woman's narrative suggests that, in the absence of a consistent, stable and empowering relationship with her mother, she has turned away from her mother to another mother figure in her life: her grandmother. Rutter (1996) also suggests that the mother-daughter relationship is the ground for teaching, taking, and sharing the feminine experience. This teaching and sharing of the traditional feminine experience is evident in her narrative as she speaks of learning how to knit, do crafts, and cook from her grandmother. The powerful and lasting bond this relationship fostered is also evident in that seven years have gone by since her grandmother's passing, and, given the turbulence of her life, it is still her grandmother,

even in spirit alone, who can encourage this young woman and reassure her that circumstances in her life will "clear up" and "get better." This speaks to the importance of an empowering mother figure in a young woman's life, even if that person is not her biological mother. Of course, this also suggests questions around the effects on young women's understandings of themselves who have neither an empowering mother, nor mother figure, in their lives.

Coming back to the importance of young women's independence and autonomy, as opposed to an uncritical, all-encompassing, carbon copy of a mother's thoughts, beliefs, and actions, some of what young women learn from their mothers is not necessarily perceived as positive, even in healthy and stable relationships. For example, in our second interview, Sarah, who was adopted into a two-parent home that later became a single-parent home with just her mother, talked about how she believes much of her anxiety and self-consciousness stems from worrying about what other people think of her. She begins by sharing her opinions about society's negative influence on the matter at large, and mid-way through this narrative, said the following:

> I think it just comes from, like especially when you're growing up, just little things that you know, you kind of subconsciously think about. Like, I can remember like, when I was younger, like, even if my mom was going to the grocery store really quick or just to the corner store, like, she'd go into the bathroom and redo her makeup and her hair. And I always asked her and laughed at her when I was little. I was like, "Why are you doing that? Like, it's Spring Creek. No one cares. People wear pajamas to the grocery store." And she'd be

like, "Well it's just what I do. You're a girl. You're supposed to look good in public" and I never understood that. I was like, "Why can't you not?" And then like, growing up, I find myself almost doing that now too and um, I think, just cause girls are known, especially like from society, to act certain ways so if you don't, you become more self-conscious and then like, that passes on.

Sarah speaks, again, to the notion of a retrospective awareness that comes as young women transition through their adolescent years; however, this narrative points specifically to the steadfast influences mother figures have throughout these transitions. While another participant speaks of an explicit teaching of traditional feminine skills such as knitting and cooking, Sarah speaks of an unconscious learning of perceived feminine behaviors of which she was able to recognize the effects of only in hindsight, after those lessons had lasting effects on her forming female subjectivity. Societal messages about the importance of superficial beauty, messages she once questioned, found humorous, and resisted in childhood, turned into pointed messages about girlhood from her mother, that she now finds herself implementing as a seventeen-year-old young woman.

Sarah does not speak with blame or judgment toward her mother for teaching her some less than empowering ideas about being a girl; rather, she justifies her mother's behaviors by attributing them to societal messages that she once learned, and passed on. However, in our final interview, as she explained why she does not want children in the future, Sarah highlighted the significant influence that her grandmother had in empowering her.

I think especially with girls too, maybe not as much now, but even years ago

when my mom, she was born in 1959. She said like, growing up in the 60s and

stuff that was the end goal. Like, you know, you were the housewife. You stayed

at home. You didn't get a job. That's another thing I think that influenced me not

to be like that, is like, my Nanna. She has five kids. So she raised five kids on her

own because she got divorced from her husband like, right away. Yeah, that

happened. And she had to work. She worked all through the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s.

And she was always like, you know, "Make sure you can make a living on your

own." She was never that woman who depended on a man for anything. Like, she

really forged her own path. And with five kids in Toronto in a small house, it was

hard, but she did it and I really look up to that.

Sarah's narrative highlights the ways in which sharing stories of a female history can

influence young women's forming subjectivities. Learning from stories of lived

experiences is entrenched as a prominent theme in feminist research on mothers and

daughters. O'Reilly (1998) calls it the motherline, by which she means the connection of

women to their female ancestors by illuminating the ways in which their own life stories

may be linked to those of previous generations of women in their families and cultures

(Green, 2006). Sarah's future desires and plans are influenced by the motherline. After

hearing stories of how her grandmother overcame many struggles as a single mother of

five, Sarah, although she looks up to her grandmother for her strength and independence,

resists the idea of having her own children, perhaps out of a fear of facing these same

struggles herself. This fear may be further compounded given her own experiences of

being adopted and, subsequently, experiencing the divorce of her adoptive parents. Through stories of the motherline, Sarah's grandmother passes on what she believes are important life lessons of self-sustenance to her granddaughter, stories that influence Sarah's future plans and resistance to mothering. According to O'Reilly (1998), "these stories unite mothers and daughters as girls realize that their mothers were once girls and young women; additionally they provide, by lived examples, road maps of the journey into womanhood" (p. 19).

As girls move through significant transitional periods of their lives, they shed and sustain various aspects of their forming subjectivities. The girls' narratives suggest that much of the shedding of their identities comes as they move from the field of elementary to secondary school, where there are different sets of cultural and social capital "required" to acquire and maintain a sense of belonging. The girls appear to (re) create themselves based on such required capital. While some of the girls claimed to be more than happy to give up pieces of their once tween and early adolescent identities, looking back at themselves with shame and disgust, others felt forced to do so to fit in, or to meet the socially constructed standards for acceptance that fosters a feeling of belonging within and across given fields, spaces, and periods of time. And, while many of the factors and forms of capital that persuade a recurrent shedding and remodeling of girls' subjectivities over the course of time seem to vary, and give way to periods of transition, a constant influence in their lives remained: their mothers and mother figures. Mothers and mother figures had a significant impact not only on how the girls' understood themselves, but also on the degree of ease in which they dealt with the negotiations of their subjectivities, particularly during times of transition. Girls subjectivities then, "are

shifting and fragmented, multiple and contradictory, displaced and positioned as they are across the various discourses which historically and currently constitute their lives" (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore & Rennie, 1994, p.192).

21st Century Girls: The Power of Mass Media

Given that today's "[young] women and girls live in a mediacentric world – a world where mainstream media institutions are part of a regulatory system of social power" (Durham, 1999a, p. 211), it is not surprising that the girls in this study wanted to discuss trends, fads, and the effects of social media on their lives in our focus group sessions, topics that were also prevalent in many of the individual interviews. Consumer-media has been recognized as a significant influence in girls' lives, and sociological scholarship on young people continues to explore the relationship between commercially imposed meaning and personal identity (MacDonald, 2014). The media are essential symbolic vehicles for the construction of meaning in girls' everyday lives (Durham, 1999b). It is important to note, however, that not all girls will construct meaning in the same way. Regardless of the intended meanings or messages behind a given media text, girls' individual standpoints will determine if and how the message is received and internalized.

Trends, fads, and the media was at the centre of our discussions during the third focus group session, and many of the excerpts in this section are taken from it, including the following, highlighting a difference of opinions and interpretations of media messages, in general.

75

Stella: I think there's a lot of, more nowadays, a lot of support towards girls over social media because like, the media seems to be promoting you know, skinnier looks and all these things like that. And then because of how long that's been going on, I think now, in the past couple of years, it's a lot of trying to counteract that. Trying to get that message out of girls' heads. Like, you know, you look beautiful however you are. You know, all that stuff. I think there's a lot of support out there for girls on social media.

June: Yeah, stuff like that. It is effective but, at the same time, it's kind of like, not effective I guess.

Like much of the discussion that took place around the topic, Stella points to the influence that social media has on girls' body image, and perceptions of beauty. In the past two decades, much attention has been given to the role of mass media in the socialization of girls, and for the most part, girls tend to be vulnerable targets to detrimental media images that represent, among other things, femininity as focused on physical beauty of a type that is virtually unattainable (Durham, 1999b). Stella suggests that the media sources partly responsible for creating the distorted lenses through which many girls' look at themselves, has, in fact, attempted to intervene and reverse the "messages in girls' heads" by offering corrective messages of unconditional beauty. However, as Orenstein (1994) warns, "we do girls a disservice…if we encourage them to feel good about themselves rather than targeting the overarching institutions, policies and cultural attitudes that make them (understandably) feel worthless" (p. xviii).

Stella seems to be alone in her perception of the effectiveness of the media's attempts to reverse the damaging messages to young women. June's more ambivalent response and acknowledgement of ineffectiveness is one that is shared by the rest of the group. Further to the ineffectiveness of such attempts to "counteract skinnier looks" and "support" girls in feeling they are beautiful as they are, the young women in this study also spoke specifically about the ways in which media negatively constructs girls, and the consequences of being exposed to such messages. In our second individual interview, prior to the focus group session focused on the influences of media, Sarah shared her frequent feelings of anxiety with me. She told me that much of her anxiety stems from worrying about what other people think about her, and described the roles that technology and social media have played in this.

> Like, girls are supposed to be seen a certain way and do certain things. If I don't act like that or I don't feel like I can do that, like that makes me anxious because I'm being different kind of thing. It's like, ten times, compared to like, I guess, when my mom went to high school in like, the 70s, and like, it's ten times different now because of technology and social media, especially because we have more of a closer connection with society now than they ever did before. Like, you know, we can, and we see all the time around us like, different ads and commercials that don't really affect us because we've grown up with it. So seeing a commercial for like, a perfume or like, Chanel or something, and seeing a woman like, you know, half exposed on a billboard with like a guy being more dominant. Like, that's not new to us. We've always grown up with that. So I think

it's like, subconscious advertisement and that kind of thing, I don't know, just has a big play in it I've found. I've done like, research on it for like different projects and just like, my own interests, and I've found that you never really think about how much it affects you but it really does, I think, anyway. And now, especially since we have like, teenagers are so connected with social media and stuff, so, yeah.

Sarah's narrative illuminates not only the power of discourse in shaping girls' understandings of how they should be and act, creating anxiety around being "different" or outside of the dominant ideological lens, but also how media compounds and complicates these understandings, perpetuating a fear of difference for young women negotiating their subjectivities in this, the mediacentric, twenty-first century. Also noteworthy is Sarah's current awareness of her "subconscious" internalizing of media messages. And while Sarah's admission of a subconscious consumption of messages may seem dire, Durham (1999a) argues that some girls who have been exposed to mass media's patriarchal ideologies throughout their entire lives may be capable of rejecting its more harmful messages. In this vein, Willett (2008) also suggests that by focusing on the negative effects of media, instances of girls' resistance through an expressed awareness and critique of how they are being positioned by media may be overlooked. When read in this regard, Sarah's awareness of how her immersion in a culture of commercials and billboards dripping with patriarchal ideologies, ideologies that feminist cultural studies locate as being articulated to power structures that work to sustain gender inequities and

sexual subordination (Durham, 1999a), is, in fact, a form of resistance, rather than a simple narrative of being a helpless victim of media.

During our final individual interview I ask June to elaborate on a comment she made in a previous focus group session. June, like Sarah, also expressed an awareness and critique of how she feels "the Internet" has positioned today's young women.

> **Researcher**: In the second focus group you said "girls aren't as sacred on themselves anymore." Why do you think that is?
>
> **June**: Like, we've lost respect for ourselves. We're degrading ourselves to having a man again to have to do everything for us. Like, all over the Internet it's like, all these girls are tots and stuff, which means slut by the way. And like, there's these pictures saying like, "I'll do anything to keep my man happy. He's my king." And it's like, don't do anything to keep him happy. Do something to keep you happy! Guys nowadays, they feel like they can have any girl they want. And they can because girls are letting it happen.

June's discussion can be read alongside Pipher's (1994) "Reviving Ophelia" discourse, one that positions adolescent girls as a group who cease to give attention to their own desires and focus on how they can please others. "Others," particularly in the lives of girls and young women, often includes members of their peer group, but June's narrative points, yet again, to the acquisition and maintenance of social capital in the form of heteronormative male attention. Moreover, she attributes this loss of girls' self-care, agency, and the undoing of feminism's collective gains to a media culture consuming today's youth. In her discussion, June, at times, positions herself collectively within the

79

greater culture of a girlhood shaped by mass media's patriarchal constructions; however, she subsequently expresses a position she feels is outside of the norm of "keeping her man happy," indicating a sharp awareness of young women's positioning, and clear resistance to it.

Unfortunately, while some girls, like Sarah and June, expressed an awareness of, or resistance to the damaging influences of mass culture, many girls, even those who expressed such a resistance, are still confined and constrained by social expectations for women. Brown and Gilligan (1992) state that, in adolescence, girls enter into a time and space marked by anger, the awareness of, and the ultimate submission to being confined and constrained by the social expectations of femininity. Mass media further influences the cultural confinement and repression of girls, serving up messages brimming with sexist and otherwise problematic representations of adolescent girls (Durham, 1999a). In our third focus group session, June demonstrated such a position of awareness tainted with structural entrapment.

> There's like those websites that are like, you'll see pictures of girls holding dogs and stuff and like all dressed up. And there's these other pictures that are like, "She's a tot" and stuff and like, there's this girl wearing slutty clothing. Or like, younger girls these days dressing older and stuff. Like, I don't know, girls are just kind of played off as like what society thinks they are instead of like what we kind of actually are. Cause it's like, there's really no in between for a girl to be kind of a girl. It's either she's a whore or she's kind of nice on social media. There's kind

of no in between of like just being a girl. It's either you're one thing or you're another.

As Gordon (2006) suggests, there is a stark gap between what girls know from experience, and how institutional truths about them were constructed. June echoes this idea when she notes a difference between how "society plays off" young women her age as compared to what they "actually are." Specifically, she suggests that social media has constructed a binary, confining girls to being "whores" or "nice." June's awareness and critique of how media culture has positioned modern young women can be read as a form of resistance; however, she expresses a feeling of being trapped in the subject positions available to her, unable to exist in the "in between" of "just being a girl." June's expressed frustration of feeling trapped within discursive categories mirrors a central tenet of feminist post-structuralism: women and girls are constructed by, and construct themselves through, the different discourses that are available to them; however, while girls are able to take up particular discourses, they are limited by the discourses available to them based on their historical, social, and cultural context (Reay, 2001).

Such feelings of limitation were also evident during my final interview with Julie. Since Julie chose to not attend the focus group sessions, I spent time during each of our interviews explaining what the group had talked about, and asking her opinions on the topics that were discussed to ensure her voice was represented, and to encourage her to feel included in the study as a whole. As we were discussing the topics of the third focus group session, centred on social media, trends and fads, as requested by the girls, Julie said the following:

I feel like a lot of people have a lot of expectations that they do have that they do post on Facebook, especially the guys, about what a girl should look like or be like. And girls have very strong opinions about what girls should dress like or not dress like kinda thing. I feel like it kinda impacts you cause I feel like you can't really be who you want to be kinda thing. I feel like they always talk about who you should be and I feel like we're too focused on that than who we want to be…It's dumb. I think we should just let girls do whatever they want to. I mean, if they like a trend they should just go with it and not deal with it. Cause leggings are really comfortable, might I add… It's like, before you don't follow the trends, "Oh like, you're dull." But then when you do it, it's like, "Oh, now you're basic."

Explaining a common sentiment among the girls on this topic, Julie's narrative suggests that, in part, mass media constructs girls in a way that leaves them feeling like "[they] can't really be who [they] want to be." She points specifically to the role of social media in manipulating and confining girls' understandings of who they are and what they "should look like or be like" to gain the acceptance of others. Like June, Julie notes a constructed binary, this time related to girls' decisions as to whether or not to follow portrayals of trends and fads in the media, a decision that leaves them to be labeled as "dull" or "basic."

To provide further context here, Julie, and other girls' use of the term "basic" refers to (white) girls who follow trends on social media. The following excerpt is taken from our third focus group session where the girls explain what a "basic" or "common" white girl is.

Stella: It kind of has a bit of a negative connotation but I mean, I don't mind admitting that I am a basic white girl. It's kinda hard to explain. Like, people make fun of it, but it's not like to be mean or anything like that. It's just kinda to have a sense of humor about it. A lot of it I guess sort of is about following all the trends. Like, if something's basic it's like, everyone's doing it. I was saying earlier about like how on Twitter there's anon accounts, like, they always tend to post the same things. And I always say like, "These basic accounts. They're basic posts." It just sort of means they're all posting the same things…Yeah, I follow them. Yeah, and like, common white girl, when it first came out, I was in grade ten. I guess that's how I would say it originated. Common white girl was a Twitter account that got made with like, a picture of Cinderella as the icon for it. It posted all these things that basic white girls do. And I also follow this other one. It's called "cocaine's so white." It's like, "Cocaine's so white that it watches Pretty Little Liars." Or like, just things that white people do. That's another account like that. Yeah, that's where I think the common white girl thing started was that account. It posts these things that white girls do, but nowadays it's just like, it kinda goes with any other anon account. Like, all the trends. When I say trends I mean like, people post videos or pictures of something that could be like a reaction. So like for example, "me as a parent" and it's a picture of like, Kris Jenner saying something to her kids. That's just one example. "Me as a parent. Me as a girlfriend." Just like, "This is so me."

June: Or "Goals."

Stella: Oh yeah! "Goals" is like, so like, if someone posted a picture of like, a cute couple doing cute couple things then it would be like "relationship goals." Or if there's a girl who's really pretty and you wanna be as pretty as her you would comment on it like, "Goals."

While it is not my intention to delve into a lengthy discussion around the obvious issues of race and intersectionality inherent in the representation of the "basic white girl," I note my awareness that Stella's interpretation of this representation as humorous, innocently stems from her standpoint as a middle-class, white girl. However, as Griffin (2004) points out, discourses such as girl power, for example, have been associated exclusively with western white girls and Ono (2000) adds that there is a danger in popular media's defining such discourses as white because it marginalizes girls of other races by weakening or vilifying ideas about and images of them.

Turning back to Julie's narrative of feeling pressured to follow the latest trends in the media, a pressure that leaves her feeling trapped in a binary of being either "dull" or "basic," depending on the level of her adherence to such trends, it is important to note that a post-structuralist approach in feminist media studies recognizes the multiple and often contradictory ways of engaging with media texts (Willett, 2008). For example, while Stella adopts the basic white girl identity as part of her own, Julie views this constructed option for her own subjectivity as less than desirable. The essence of being a "basic white girl" is fitting in; acquiring and maintaining dominant (undoubtedly, economically driven) prescriptions for a set of cultural, social, and symbolic capital in order to fit in. These indirect messages of "necessary" acquisition and maintenance

84

couched in an abundance of media texts, which are, ironically, coupled with explicit messages telling girls "you look beautiful however you are," leave young women, understandably, conflicted and confused.

As well as highlighting the ways in which media culture has influenced their understandings of themselves, their perceived limitations of femininity, and, at times, how they have been positioned by such an immersion in media culture, the girls also spoke of how media has influenced their future goals, highlighted in the following excerpt from our third focus group session:

> **June**: I'd have to say it [social media] affects my future cause I follow certain things I wanna do in the future. Like, I'm an art fanatic so I follow a bunch of art pages and stuff. Like, interior design and set design and all that. So I'll just scroll down Instagram and see this beautiful set and I'm like, "Oh, I can't wait to do that one day."
>
> **Stella**: Yeah. Or even like, I'll see pictures of like, New York City, or like fancy apartments in the city. They don't even have to be fancy. Just an apartment in the city with like, a laptop.
>
> **June**: I'm so excited for my future from social media. It makes it play off so like, perfect though.

While June attests that social media does influence her future goals, sparking creative ideas for her desired career in interior design, she seems to question the validity of such utopian portrayals of her future, in general. Stella, on the other hand, during our photo-voice interview, revealed a more deeply internalized influence. After sharing meaningful

photographs representing her past and present, Stella shared the following narrative and

photograph with me, representing her future:

Figure 5: New York
(Retrieved by informant from http://travelnoire.com/12-hours-in-new-york-
city/?hvid=1vG240)

So obviously that's New York. I've loved New York for the longest time. I

always wanted to live there. I still haven't even been there, ever, but, I've always

wanted to live there. I've always liked everything that goes on. Now that I'm

realizing I want to get into the show business industry, I was like, yeah, I could

live in New York. …That's the thing about my job, it's not something you can do

anywhere. I have to just kinda go for it. I'm gonna have to try and move

somewhere and try and make something of myself, meet people. I would love to

work behind the scenes at Radio City Music Hall. I could do like, I don't know,

anything. I could like, plan that production or, you know, whatever it is that goes

on there. I could, you know, do promotion for Broadway. I don't know. There's just lots of opportunities in New York.

When this photographic narrative is read alongside Stella's previous comment taken from the focus group session, it becomes clear that media has played a role in shaping her imagined and desired future. Having never been to New York City, yet admiring "everything that goes on there" in the land of opportunity, Stella has created an imagined future for herself by accessing media texts.

It has long been noted that mass media representations of girls and young women constitute a facet of the cultural shaping of their understandings of themselves and their worlds. Speaking to girls' subjectivities, Hancock (1989) states that, "in donning the masks provided by mass culture, a girl easily loses sight of who and what she is beneath the feminine façade she adopts in youth (p. 22). More forcefully, and, more recently, Pipher (1994) echoes this sentiment, stating that popular media culture is "poision" for girls and young women (p. 28). With the exception of Stella, who perceives some media messages as supportive in attempting to counteract damaging messages related to body image, the other girls in the study spoke only of the more poisonous messages Pipher refers to. Media culture had a significant influence on the girls' understandings of themselves, their perceived possibilities and limitations for both femininity, and, occasionally, their imagined futures. At times, the girls noted a sharp awareness of these influences and the resulting constructions and confined positioning of modern young women, an awareness that can be read as a form of resistance. And, while many theoretical discussions of feminist resistance rest on the autonomy of individual readers

and their abilities to construct meaning from the messages, theorizing women's resistance to patriarchal media discourse must address "negotiating the meanings of cultural signs as a process embedded in a broader field of economic and political struggles" (Durham, 1999a, p. 214).

Finally, as I conclude this chapter and move to discussing the ways in which the subjectivities, agencies, and future desires of rural young women are further complicated when the factor of place is considered, I close with the following quotation, taken, again, from our third focus group session, and note that Midtown, part of a region and community separate from the research site, is the closest small city, approximately an hour away.

Stella: City girls are skinnier, prettier, do their makeup better. I guess something that me and some other people that I know of, it's like, Midtown girls even to us are like "Goals." Like, I don't know if it's being a bigger high school, but all Midtown girls seem to be really pretty and popular on social media. I'm sure city girls are even more so like that.

Chapter 4
Rural Girls: "The Footprint of the Ant"

Understanding rural as a place with its own set of meanings is an essential part of making sense of the girls' everyday lives. Location matters when considering how young women understand themselves, their worlds, and the possibilities and limitations in their lives. In other words, the dominant discourses that shape subjectivities are negotiated from particular social and geographical locations. In this chapter I examine three of those discourses as identified by the young women of Spring Creek. These discourses, named as "sluts, rednecks and skids" by the girls, operate to categorize, stigmatize and control young women. I also note here that I use the terms "rural" and "small town" interchangeably, in keeping with the girls' descriptions of their location.

Negotiating Small Town Stigmas: Sluts, Rednecks and Skids

Sluts

> **Researcher**: The last time we met one of the things you wanted to talk about was the stigmas in small towns, so that's where I want to start today. What are the stigmas that you believe exist?
>
> …
>
> **Stella**: Sluts.
>
> **Sarah**: Yeah, there's like, town bicycle or like, "Oh, you're gonna get pregnant by the time you're fifteen."
>
> **Jessica**: Yeah.

Stella: Lots of teen pregnancy.

Sarah: Yeah, there's a lot. I feel like that's generalized as a small town thing. Like, I feel like –

Jessica: Yeah, every year there's somebody that gets pregnant, at least one person [other girls agreeing].

June: My friend in Riverside, he used the term for Spring Creek and like, the term was like, I beg your pardon, but, "It's not your bitch, it's just your turn." That's like, the term of Spring Creek for females.

The girls' discussion, taken from our second focus group session, highlights their belief that being a slut is "generalized as a small town thing." And while negotiating sexuality, and terms such as "slut" that are often a part of this negotiation, is certainly not localized to rural girls, it is important to pay heed to their feeling of being stigmatized as sluts and how that naming intersects with their everyday lives in the small town of Spring Creek.

Before further presenting and analyzing the girls' discussions on this topic, it is helpful to consider how the term "slut" has been conceptualized historically, and the meanings it currently inhabits. The origins of the word "slut" are unknown; however, as early as the fourteenth century, the term "sluttish" was used to describe both men and women who were thought to be dirty and untidy (Mills, 1991). Later, it was exclusively associated with women, acquiring the negative connotation of "sexually promiscuous women." By the twentieth century, "slut" had become a general term of abuse for women (Mills, 1991). The term "slut" has had its meaning constructed in the context of sexual double standards where men are free to be sexually active but women are not. In fact, women's sexuality has been positioned within the binary of Madonna or whore

90

(Attwood, 2007). And, while contemporary uses of the term are more wide-ranging, for teenage girls, in particular, the term "slut" perpetuates a sexual double standard, marks female sexuality as deviant, and works to control girls' behavior and social positioning (Bamberg, 2004; Tanenbaum, 2000; White, 2002).

Small town girls being stigmatized as sluts came up frequently in both our focus group sessions, as well as the individual interviews. It became clear that, as suggested by Tanenbaum (2000), White (2002), and Bamberg (2004), the girls saw the use of the term "slut" as referring to sexual double standards that denoted female sexual behavior as shameful, affecting both their understandings of themselves and their interactions with others. At times, they also suggested that the stigma was not limited to the girls of Spring Creek, but was a widespread belief about girls in the rural district of Nature Valley. For example, during our fourth individual interview, Stella discussed the slut stigma again.

It may have started with tweets that were like, "Nature Valley girls are sluts" and things like that. Cause I mean, I would say there is a bit of a reputation for girls in Spring Creek, Riverside, and Bay Lake for being slutty. I even know as far as Midtown, like the girls there have reputations for being sluts. Which, now that I'm saying that out loud, the fact that I can say that about like, every town around here has that sort of reputation, like that just must mean that like, everywhere has that reputation and it sorta has to cancel out, you know what I mean. Cause it can't be true about like, every single girl. Like, I can't think of someone who I genuinely think is a slut or whatever.

91

While commenting on the reputation of Spring Creek girls, Stella appears to reach an awareness, as she is "saying [it] out loud," that the slut stigma extends beyond Spring Creek, to as far as the small city of Midtown, approximately an hour away. As she is verbalizing her realization she appears to be simultaneously unsubscribing from her own beliefs that the stigma is narrowly place-based in Spring Creek; however, her realization points to a grim reality that sexually active young women are regularly positioned as sluts. Also noteworthy in Stella's narrative is the role that social media play in perpetuating the slut stigma for Nature Valley girls, thus also opening up the question about how social media may re-shape our understandings of the rural. Developments in communication technologies allow sexual texts to proliferate, make possible new forms of sexual encounter (Attwood, 2006), and, as a result, have created yet another arena in which girls must negotiate their sexual subjectivities.

In our fourth interview, Julie, like Stella, pointed to the ways in which technology further complicates girls' negotiations of sexuality and the slut stigma.

> I feel like, at our school, I've had experiences or I know people who have experiences with like, just guys and how they want something from you. I didn't do this, but like, if they get something from you, you're a slut. And they beg for you for like pictures and like, if you do send them, I know with other people, they've been called a whore and a slut. And it's like, "You asked for them and now you're calling her all these things." It's just silly.

Referring to sending and receiving sexualized pictures through text messages, Julie describes one way sex has taken on new forms through the use of technology, disrupting

older conceptions of the status and place of sex in society. According to Attwood (2006):

> Today, 'sex' may be an out of body experience, very intimately performed across time and distance; it may be an intense act of communication between strangers; an encounter conjoining flesh and technology; an act of presentation and a representation which is consumed as quickly as it is produced; a way of articulating or disarticulating identity; a type of interaction never before possible in human history. (p. 79)

When understood in this way, sexual relations can be more than just a physical act. Technology opens up multiple opportunities for girls to express their sexuality, but also creates more opportunities for others to label them with terms like whore and slut, further complicating and restricting their interactions with others.

Julie's narrative also highlights a double standard with which girls are faced, where the young men soliciting the sexual images are in positions of power, seemingly free from being stigmatized based on such actions, while young women bear the consequences of the engagement. And, while she is careful to assure me that she has not taken part in such exchanges, Julie recognizes that girls' bodies are constructed as sexual sites to be exploited and that technology facilitates that process and makes slut shaming more immediate. As the girls discussed their experiences with dating during our second focus group session, Sarah reinforced Julie's statement of the double standard with which girls are faced, being positioned as sexual objects to be had, and taken from.

Like girls are always taught, I think anyway, like um, giving something up for a guy. So like, we were talking about how like, guys, whatever, try to like have sex as fast as they can in high school and then they like, talk about it with all their friends and stuff and it's not even a big deal for them. But for girls, girls are taught like, "Oh, it's such a big deal to have sex for the first time [other girls start agreeing]. Like, you should be careful. It's one of the biggest things that'll happen to you in high school." Like, why should it be like that for girls and not like that for guys? Girls are taught so much like, to be giving stuff to guys, and guys are taking things. That's just subconsciously taught that they take things from you and you have to give this to them. But it's not vice versa.

Both Julie and Sarah recognize that the female body is seen as a site to be had or taken from at the hands of their male peers. Referring to the physical act of sexual intercourse, Sarah points to the double standard that young women face. It is "not a big deal for guys" to engage in sexual activity, and such activity is celebrated among their male peers. For girls, on the other hand, sexual activity is coated with a romantic veneer and talk of "the first time" and "one of the biggest things that'll happen to you in high school." And always, if they become sexually active, they are aware of the stigmatizing sluts discourse. In the field of their rural secondary school, the physical act of sexual intercourse transforms into a coveted form of embodied cultural capital for young men, but an act of shame, requiring caution and silence for young women.

While the negotiation of sexual discourse, be it with or without the added layer of technology, is not unique to rural girls, there are place-based realities that intersect with

and further complicate how these young women navigate their sexual desires and interactions with others and avoid the label of slut. Without exception, and in a variety of conversational contexts, all seven girls in this study claimed that, in the rural town of Spring Creek, the lack of anonymity was not an enjoyable aspect of their daily lives. In fact, research on rural youth's perceptions of rurality suggests that the negative side of the transparency of the rural social fabric is felt most strongly by the community's youth, particularly, females (Haugen & Villa, 2005). On rare occasions, the girls would recognize and appreciate the benefits of living in a close-knit community or being in a small school; however, this was frequently followed by a narrative of feeling monitored by others, and, consequently, having to adjust or avoid certain behaviors, ultimately, compromising their sense of freedom to be who they are. June conveyed this issue quite poignantly during our second interview.

> Being in a small school everyone knows everyone and it's like, word travels fast cause everyone knows everyone. Um, trust factors, it's nice like, when you have your group, but I've learned to kind of trust only certain people if I don't want my private life to go throughout the school... Since it is like, a small community and a small school and all that, and like, everyone knows everyone, you kinda want to keep like a good persona I guess cause like, it is a community where there's elderly people and you don't want to be that one kid that like, stands out I guess, in the wrong way.

June's observation that there is a set of unwritten rules attached to girlhood in Spring Creek, rules that are easily monitored through a lack of privacy and, if deviated from,

identify members of the community who "stand out in the wrong way," speaks to Bourdieu's concept of a collective habitus. Bourdieu (1990b) stresses the collective nature of habitus, positing that each individual's habitus tends to exhibit many group-specific characteristics, and is never more than a deviation from a collective reference. June highlights the pressure she feels to "keep a good persona," a pressure commonly felt amongst the girls in this study, in order to align with the collective culture of the Spring Creek community. Of course, this keeping up of appearances in light of a lack of anonymity suggests that the girls may have to conceal certain aspects of their subjectivities, and are coerced into giving the calculated performances of girlhood considered acceptable by the rural community at large.

Situated in the context of Spring Creek girls' sexuality, this place-based experience of surveillance further constrains girls' deviations from the moralistic code of the collective habitus and complicates the girls' interactions with others, influencing the possibilities and limitations of enacting their own desires. During our third interview, Megan conveyed this sentiment:

> The sluts thing, like, Spring Creek is actually like, pretty good when it comes to people um, I'm not saying it's a bad thing, I don't think that it's okay that people judge other people on how much they like to do it with other people. Like I don't think that should be a bad thing. But, in like, I'm just going on what people think of us, I don't actually mean it, I'm not saying it as a bad thing, I just think that Spring Creek is pretty good with it. But then, when like, other people hear about it and then it starts to spread like [snaps fingers] that then people just

automatically think that maybe most girls would probably be like, sluts cause of those couple girls that have, seem to um, like, people have seemed to latch on to and like, pick on them. Those people that are picking on those girls automatically assume that rest of the town's girls would probably be like that if there's a couple of them that would be like that.

Referring to the slut stigma, Megan also echoes an understanding of a collective habitus as she explains that she is "going on what people think of us." Her use of the collective "us" refers to the habitus of small town girls. In this small, close-knit community, which is occasionally celebrated as a positive attribute of Spring Creek, Megan, like June, stresses the detrimental nature of how quickly, in the snap of a finger, to be precise, one's private life becomes public. The girls know that any sexual activity is discussed through the slut discourse and feel pressured to eliminate, reduce, or hide such activities. In fact, their knowledge of the slut stigma, coupled with peer and adult surveillance and lack of anonymity in Spring Creek, led some girls to extend their concerns to romantic relationships, in general. Jessica raised this dilemma during our final interview.

> I think it puts more pressure on girls to not have - they don't wanna look like that. They don't want to be seen as a slut. So it's like, girls are hesitant to have boyfriends. Like, if you have a boyfriend or if you have multiple boyfriends, people will look at you and think that you're a slut even though you're not.

This hesitancy to form romantic relationships is understandable.

While late modern cultures are characterized by a move to more permissive attitudes to sex (Atwood, 2006), Canada's rural spaces are often characterized as sites of stagnation and decline (Corbett, 2006) where attitudes toward gender roles and sexual behavior remain traditional. At the beginning of our second interview, Sarah spoke to this, specifically, with respect to growing up in Spring Creek as a young woman.

> …I think like, just um, sometimes cause it's a small town there's a lot of small minded people so like, sometimes some people will just think that there's better, there's more opportunities for boys and they'll try to create more opportunities for the guys than the girls kind of, cause, I know it's 2015 but I still see some people thinking like, "Oh, like, you're a girl, you shouldn't be doing that, like, that's a guy thing to do" which I mean, shouldn't really exist, but it does cause it's Spring Creek. I think overall like, it's okay to be growing up as a girl but like, um, I think it's almost harder to gain confidence cause some people are so set in their ways kind of thing.

While demonstrating an awareness that positions her as being outside of the norm, Sarah equates Spring Creek with small mindedness. Specifically, Sarah points to a behind-the-times set of beliefs surrounding gender roles that limit opportunities for these small town girls, as a result of Spring Creek "people [being] so set in their ways." Aligning with Sarah's understanding that, for Spring Creek girls, it's "harder to gain confidence cause some people are so set in their ways," Jiwani (1998) claims that life choices and the ability to exercise agency may be further limited for rural girls as they are often subject to

the traditional norms in the family around marriage and childcare. And, in our third interview, Megan spoke directly to Jiwani's (1998) suggestion:

> I think that maybe people think that girls are really traditional in small towns. Um, like, they're not sexist, but like, girls are really like, "Oh, husband. Gotta clean everything. Gotta make all the food. Gotta care for the children. Can't work and everything."

Megan highlights the traditional family values and entrenched gender role expectations that are commonly associated with rural cultures (Varpalotai, 2005). Being a traditional girl is welcomed, or, expected, perhaps, whereas deviation from such place-based ideals around gender roles and traditional values is likely to result in critical comment. In his ethnographic study of a coastal fishing community in rural, Atlantic Canada, Corbett (2007a) observes how traditional values and gender role expectations, similar to those described by Megan, influenced the futures of young woman (and young men) in the community. Particularly interested in the career choices of those who left the rural community compared to those who stayed, Corbett (2007a) notes that women who left the community tended toward one of two paths, either paid employment in the service industry or helping professions, or unpaid employment as traditional homemakers. For those women who stayed, they were left with the local options of marriage and part-time paid work or social benefits for family support. Corbett (2007a) argues that gender roles were static, regardless of women's decisions to stay or leave. In the rural town of Spring Creek, where traditional gender roles around family and work are also present, six of the seven girls imagined futures for themselves that included traditional values of marriage

and children. The goals and imagined futures of these young women will be discussed more fully in the following chapter, but I note this here to emphasize the near-unanimous desire to replicate the traditions of marriage and child-bearing.

Furthering Megan's narrative of traditional expectations for small town girls, and the gender roles inherent in this construction of femininity, June described the ways in which her family history is entrenched in such traditions.

> Like, my poppa used to be a part of like, this hunting thing that only the guys could go to but my grandma would bake the meals every night. Like, she'd bake turkey and pie and all that and bring them their beer. She'd go out to the cabin and eat dinner with them. She'd take it home, do their laundry, like, I don't know. I guess she was like the perfect form of a wife for a hunter. And like, they always nominated her every year cause like, I guess she cooks great. Like, my mom's mom. But she does. I love her cookies.

In line with discussions from the previous chapter, June's narrative returns to the importance of the motherline: the sharing of and learning from stories of a feminine history. June may be learning through a connection to her grandmother's lived experiences what are considered appropriate displays of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, June's story constructs hunting as a masculine practice that "only the guys" could be a part of, located in the wilderness, outside of the rural home. While the men are out hunting, June's grandmother is defined by her role as a caregiver in the family network. Not only is her grandmother positioned in a nurturing role, she is nominated and

celebrated by the men of the hunt club for how well she performs her domestic duties. In hearing stories of her family's traditional feminine history, June develops an understanding of what the "perfect form of a wife for a hunter" entails, a role that she may find herself in one day, using the motherline as a road map for carrying on the traditions.

The young women of Spring Creek are not simply "doing girl," but are working to construct themselves as, and against, appropriately gendered subjects in relation to the dominant expectations of this socio-spatial context. Noteworthy in the girls' narratives is the absence of "slut-shaming." They do not engage in this form of sexual regulation by condemning other girls for dressing like "sluts" and "whores" to gain male attention (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). In fact, the girls were adamant that, regardless of what "other" people thought of them, they "didn't think it was okay to judge people on how much they like to do it with other people." While the girls' sexuality and gendered performances are constrained by the discourses available to them, surely a space of transgressive possibility is opened by their awareness of and resistance to being defined by the dominant discourses and stigmas of Spring Creek femininity.

Rednecks

As Canada's urban centres are celebrated as sites of resourceful and cosmopolitan citizens, rural spaces are represented as sites of stagnation and regression, invoking classist imagery of "rednecks" with "backward" lifestyles (Corbett, 2006). For the young women of Spring Creek, their perceptions of being stigmatized as "rednecks" is characterized by two inextricable attributes of their daily lives in the greater region of Nature Valley, and their community of Spring Creek. They identify a lack of diversity in

the population, alongside the class issues raised by a seasonal abundance of "rich" tourists who are thought to maintain the community's economic stability. The brief discussion of the research site in chapter two noted that the student body in Spring Creek is, for the most part, racially homogenous. However, as I learned from the girls, the lack of diversity extends beyond race. This rather lengthy excerpt, taken from our second focus group session, provides further cultural context for the research site, highlights some of the place-based nuances of Spring Creek, and privileges the girls' understandings of their school and community.

> **Researcher**: The last time we met you mentioned wanting to talk about "cultural differences." Can you elaborate on that?
>
> **Sarah**: I think what I meant by that was kind of, we touched on it in our interview, is talking about how Spring Creek is a really Westernized town. We don't get a lot of culture. Um like, to put it simply, it's a white town. It's like, almost like, it's ruled. But like, a lot of elderly, Caucasian people live here. So that's kind of like, where it is. I feel like almost, now recently, it's starting to get a little more culturally diverse. But like, still like, even then, it's a pretty Caucasian-based town, in religion-wise too. Like, not that I know of like, I don't see a lot of people I know who are like, Buddhists or even like Jewish. Just like, different religion-wise. Just cause like, Spring Creek is such a religious town. There's like, seven or eight churches just on the main street.
>
> **Stella**: Yeah, it's true.

Sarah: But they're all like, Catholic, Baptist, like, I think, they're relatively all the same. Like, New Hope, Free Methodists, like, those types of religions are very similar. So like, I don't know. It's all based like that. So I just wanted to talk about like, I don't know, how much better, I think, I always think it would be way better if we were more culturally diverse just cause like, it opens up so many new opportunities and doors. Like, different points of view. And I think I even mentioned before how like, even if we took like, Native American, cause it's a high influence in Canada and Ontario, like their perspectives into view. Like, there's a reserve [nearby]. Like, I don't know. I think if we just, were more open-minded that way it would be better here.

Researcher: What do you all think about Sarah's comments?

June: I have to agree. I think like, it would be a lot more exciting to see like, a bunch of different cultures kind of running around. Like, not trying to be racist or anything but like, mainly the only time we ever see a different culture is when like, the leaves are falling cause the Japanese people come up to see like, the [local attractions]. Other than that, I never see like, any other kind of like, I guess, race. Or, no one that really celebrates a different religion.

Megan: And kids that grow up in this town, like since they were really little, and not growing up with a whole bunch of cultures around them, they might grow up with that stigma. So maybe if there was more cultures then the kids, there wouldn't be so much stigma and it kind of would be different.

Researcher: What stigma do you mean?

Megan: I don't know. Just like, racism mostly. Cause I know a lot of people in this town do have it.

Sarah: Yeah, and like um, I think even with like elderly people, well since like my great aunt or my grandparents, and I've heard it come from them and they make it sound so like, normal. But it's just like, right out there. It's just shocking to hear but then I think about it and think like, even people at this school, like teenagers are really like, not right out racism like, "Oh, I hate black people" or something. But it's like really, really, really implied. Like, lots of teenagers use the "N" word because it's in rap and stuff, but we're all white. Like, I don't think we have the right to say things like that. Like, I know Kevin, he's a black student here, he's gotten upset about it before. And he's like, "You can't say things like that." And like, we just brush it off cause like, social media and different things like Vine, like people just make racism into something they think is funny so it's not right out there in front of us. It's like, definitely more implied with different things. So we just try to accept it and think it's okay and be like, "Oh, we're not being racist." But, we are. And it's almost like, engrained in us. Like, sometimes you'll think something in your head and you'll just be like, "Oh, I can't believe I thought that." It just comes out. Like, some people, like you can't help it because you were almost raised that way. I think that's especially prevalent in small towns like Spring Creek because we barely see any culture and diversity or anything.

It is clear from the girls' narrative that they do feel they are disadvantaged by a lack of cultural diversity in the community, stating that Spring Creek would be "more exciting"

104

and "better" if this were corrected. Specifically, the girls connect the lack of diversity in Spring Creek to what they see as racist and small-minded ways of thinking in their community. Again, it is important to avoid over-generalizing their narratives in a non-critical manner or associating racist attitudes with all rural communities. However, I must pay attention to how their realities, unique to their everyday lives in Spring Creek, are understood and influence their constructions of themselves, and their worlds. In seeking self-understanding and explanations of their own socio-spatial standpoints, it is as though the girls are imagining more desirable discursive locations for themselves and members of their community, while also articulating an awareness that, in some ways, their standpoints are bound by the place in which they experience everyday life.

The lack of cultural diversity, as the girls put it, intersects in complex and unique ways in the greater region of Nature Valley and the small town of Spring Creek when an abundant influx of tourists and cottagers, primarily from urban centres, moves in, particularly during the months of July and August. However, while the girls' narrative above suggests that diversity is a welcomed change, elsewhere they also frequently referred to small town citizens as being seen, particularly by urban tourists and cottagers, as "hicks," "country" and "rednecks." The term "redneck" is a well-known popular cultural identity that, in the United States, implies being blue-collar, rebellious and southern (Hartigan, 2003). Entrenched in discourses of both race and class, the term reflects a significant dynamic of whiteness as a racial category, but only a working class whiteness combined with reactionary right wing politics (Hartigan, 2003). In Canada, the term is used somewhat differently in relation to people who live in rural areas to signify a certain backwardness, a conservative and, to some degree, sexist and racist perspective

105

on the world. As June and I discussed her family dynamics during our second interview, and she explained how her mother is a "country bumpkin" who tries to fit in with her father's "proper" British family, I am given my first of many similar descriptions of the stigmatized redneck lifestyle, one that is contradictory.

> **June**: I have to say about my grandma that's not ladylike is she loves horses so she'll shovel horse crap cause we have like, a barn. We have four horses and all of them are in her name and she loves them to death. So like, she'll drive out every day and clean the stable and then she'll go back, shower. And like, she's into opera and all that crap. Oh my god. I used to have to go and sit down and watch like, three-hour theatres with her when I was little and I'd be like, "Mom, I don't want to." And she's like, "Do it. It makes your grandma happy," kind of thing. So I'd go and watch these like, horrible Dr. Seuss operas and shit with her for like three hours. And like, I'd have to wear like, little, like, big heels and like, the most itchiest dresses ever. And you sit there and you sweat and it's like, everything, go away. I don't know, I guess I have like two sides to me where I'll have my lazy days like, kind of my mom's side of the family where it's just like, they're used to being hicks so like, wear track pants and baggy sweaters. And then I'll have like my nice kinda casual days where like, I'll be nice.
>
> **Researcher**: So, what's a hick?
>
> **June**: [Laughs] Um, like a redneck.
>
> **Researcher**: Okay, what does that mean?

June: I guess like, people that, I don't know, don't really care for like, living the kind of, let's have the most expensive jewelry and like, the Chanel perfume and all that. It's like, the people that go out and like, connect with the woods. Like, from my mom being like, as young as she can remember up, she used to have to go out and cut firewood every night with my poppa and bring it in. And she'd help my grandma with like, the garden and like, you have to have the nice kind of cut lawn. Like, she tried to cut the lawn once and it didn't work cause my poppa was back and forth and back and forth. Like, you have to have that nice cut lawn kinda thing. Or making dinner. Family get-togethers. Like, it's a lot of family time I've come to realize. So like, I don't know, you have like a big family dinner at least once a month I would say. Like, everyone gets together and does all that.

Researcher: So a hick or a redneck, do you see that as good or bad?

June: Um, I see it as good but how they express it on like, Family Guy and all that, it's horrible. They're like the people that like, drink the alcohol and like, have the terrible teeth and like, live in shitty sheds and stuff.

Once again, the significance of mothers and mother figures is tied to this narrative, speaking this time to understandings of femininity as they relate to the place-based discourses of being hicks and rednecks. June suggests that being a redneck, something she attributes to her mother's side of the family, stands in opposition to being "ladylike," when compared with her experiences with her grandmother on her father's side. This is not surprising, as some scholars suggest that the term "redneck" connotes more of a masculine than a feminine identity (Cuervo, 2014). Surely, this creates complications as

June negotiates which of her "two sides" she is expected to display given the contradictory expectations of her influential female role models. On one hand, June is expected to be "ladylike" by her grandmother, which entails wearing heels and itchy dresses while acquiring a certain cultural capital by attending the opera, and on the other hand, a role that seems more authentic for June, she imitates her "mom's side of the family," giving herself permission to be "lazy" and "dress in track pants and baggy sweaters" because that side of the family is "used to being hicks."

As Julie and I discussed the ways in which rural communities are (mis)represented in the media during our final interview, she echoed June's sentiments:

Julie: I actually have a picture that I saw. It was like, they think that small town people are country and hick and like hillbilly. So I saw this picture and it said: "Listen up ladies. If your man doesn't know how to hunt and fish, you have a girlfriend." And like, there's a bunch of those. I think a lot of people like follow this guy who talks about hunting and just says that girls are like, they just kinda like, rip on guys. It's just dumb. I hate how people think that like, if you wear camo once, or if you hunted once in your life, they qualify them as like hillbilly, hick, country girl kinda thing. I just think it's silly.

Researcher: So based on what you're telling me, is it a good or a bad thing to be seen as a hillbilly, hick, or country person?

Julie: Yeah. They're dirty and they smell and they look bad and they don't wash a lot. Just kinda stuff like that. Or they're creepy, or that like, they dated their aunt or their uncle.

Researcher: How do you feel about that?

Julie: It hurts me a lot. It's just like a knife in your back kinda thing.

Yet again, popular media culture emerges as a significant influence in the forming of subjectivities of rural youth. Interestingly, and importantly, Julie explicitly brings rural masculinity to the forefront. Julie's interpretation of media images representing small town people suggests that there are place-based expectations on young men to "hunt and fish" to meet a certain standard of rural masculinity. Moreover, if these gender performances are not up to standard, young men are viewed in a seemingly degrading light. Of course, this has implications for young men who may ascribe to, and then strive to meet the gendered expectations associated with their place, and for young women, as their femininity is positioned as inferior.

More generally, Julie's description of perceptions of small town hicks, much like June's, is degrading and hurtful. Julie's emotional response to the demeaning characterization of small town people as hicks, namely, feeling like a "knife in her back," highlights an affective connection to place. In fact, there is an emerging body of literature, however, often focused on adults, that maps the connections between rural places and emotions (Power, Norman, & Dupre, 2014). Julie's strong emotional connection to Spring Creek is particularly interesting in that she is one of the two young women in this study who was not born and raised in Spring Creek. Julie moved to the area from Toronto seven years ago, and often spoke of her dislike for small town living and how much she missed the city and could not wait to finish high school and return. However, Julie now temporarily identifies as a small town citizen, and takes personally degrading misrepresentations of her community.

Further to the challenges presented as the redneck lifestyle intersects with competing gendered expectations, Julie and June's stories reveal a marked tension between their everyday lives in Spring Creek and the redneck stereotypes held by others. June speaks specifically to holding positive values about her self-identified redneck lifestyle that include a connection to nature, a sense of hard work, and closeness with family. These positive beliefs stand in stark contrast to the "horrible" expressions of redneck lifestyles such as those June notes on Family Guy, for example, an American, adult animated sitcom produced by Fox Broadcasting Company. June's narrative emphasizes the ways in which popular culture and the media construct an urban-rural binary and perpetuate stigmas of a redneck lifestyle aligned with rural disadvantage. Namely, Julie and June point to a lack of economic resources, entrenched in a discourse of class, such as poor hygiene and indigent living situations in "shitty sheds."

Narratives of a disparity in class between city tourists and small town rednecks became a prevalent theme throughout this study. In our second focus group session, centering on the girls' desire to discuss stigmas related to small towns, the girls explained how tourists create a class dynamic with their presence:

Stella: I think the tourists really look down on us as well. I don't know why really.

June: I think it's cause they think they have so much more than we do. Just like, we live in a small town.

Stella: Yeah, you know what, maybe they think we're really poor.

June: Yeah, and they can come here from like, from like another place.

110

Stella: And compared to them, we kinda are, and they are our money resource.

Sarah: And that's also I find like, more cottagers think that. Like, there's a difference between cottagers and tourists cause like, a lot of average people can come to Spring Creek from like, Toronto and other places and just be here for Spring Creek. But like, I find cottagers, like, you can tell that they have money cause you know, they have a cottage here. They pay like, their taxes and blah, blah. So like, I don't know, I find from them or it's more of like a, like, I've been told so many times before and I've overheard people say like, "Why don't locals shop during the weekdays so we can have the weekends to shop." That's not fair. It's like, we literally live here and you're asking us not to shop on the weekends [laughs]. Okay. Yeah, like, they just get so angry. Like I've heard it at least, me personally, I've heard it twice.

Again, the girls' discussion is centered around beliefs about class, this time, directly pointing to monetary wealth. At first, Stella appears uncertain of the reasons for tourists' disrespectful gazes upon her collective community, but upon verbalizing her thoughts, comes to the conclusion that the tourists must think "we're really poor." And while this suggests that the tourists may be mistaken in their beliefs, Stella then reinforces the class disparity by stating that "compared to them" the people of Spring Creek "kinda" are poor. Offering a concrete example of how privilege works, Sarah then draws a distinction between tourists and cottagers. This is the only time throughout the study that this distinction is made; however, it suggests the perception of a distinct hierarchy amongst those who "can come from another place" to the region of Nature Valley. According to

Sarah, "average" tourists coming "for" Spring Creek does not seem to create the same sense of unease as do those with money who the girls perceive as more powerful and entitled.

It is important to provide some further context to the financial aspects of "cottaging" in Nature Valley as the disparity of economic capital between the tourists, or, cottagers, and the "locals" of Spring Creek is significant. These urban, affluent lifestyles entailing multi-million dollar waterfront cottages, boats, spas, private golf clubs and fine dining that are made visible to the girls each summer influence their understandings of how they fit into society, and, arguably, the possibilities and limitations they view for their futures, a topic that will be discussed more fully in the following chapter. For the girls of Spring Creek, affluent city lifestyles, boasting an abundance of culture, opportunity, resources and economic capital, are not simply viewed and understood at a distance through popular media's lens. Urban-rural discourses are materialized as they experience a unique sense of urban colonization first-hand each summer, and map these lived experiences onto their own values of place and, in turn, onto themselves. By not identifying with tourists who are seen to disrupt local norms and have a sense of entitlement and ownership of Spring Creek, including simple daily activities such as shopping on the weekends, the young women establish themselves as deserving members of the community who make a legitimate claim to this place.

An upside of tourism in Nature Valley, of course, is the economic influx it provides. As Stella noted previously, the tourists "are [Spring Creek's] money resource." This understanding in and of itself, of course, creates a relationship of need, where the rural is dependent on the urban for community prosperity. The survival of many local

businesses relies heavily on how profitable the summer months are. And while the increased populations during summer months create a demand for local businesses to hire more staff, providing employment opportunities for rural youth, scholars have highlighted that weak economies in rural areas are further damaged by low-paying service and seasonal employment (Budge, 2006; McGranahan, 2003). During our second interview, Megan briefly acknowledged some of the ways in which tourism enriches seasonal life in Nature Valley; however, she quickly moved to a classed narrative of power and entitlement.

Researcher: Do you think that tourism is a positive thing for Nature Valley?

Megan: Yeah, because it definitely helps us have more events and more fun things to do. It's definitely better for the economy and everything. I don't know, they just kind of like ruin it sometimes by being like, not too much here, but just thinking that they own Nature Valley and they don't. Do you know what I mean? Like, they think that they're like boss of everyone, like everyone should be catering to them or something.

Researcher: Why do you think that is?

Megan: I don't know, maybe it's just they're used to the big city and how big cities have like more popular people. Kind of like, richer but like, not richer. Like, richer in money and there's more of them. More than in Nature Valley.

Researcher: What do you mean richer but not richer?

Megan: Like, they've got, I'm not saying Nature Valley is poor, I'm just saying that Toronto, for example, usually has more people that have more money in it.

> So the tourists that come are just used to that and everything and then when they come to Nature Valley it's all these locals that are just doing things and they're like, "Oh, you guys are lesser on the class system than we are so you have to think that we're more important, cater to our needs" kinda thing.

Here, Megan actually names what she believes to be an urban-centric perception of rural people as "lesser on the class system." Connecting back to a desire to culturally diversify the rural communities within Nature Valley, Megan makes clear that is it not the tourists presence, or being "here too much" that "ruins" it for the "locals," but rather, their "thinking that they own Nature Valley" and that "everyone should be catering to their needs." Like the other girls, Megan's feelings of being less than and looked down upon by urban tourists may, of course, be internalized as a part of her forming subjectivity. A longstanding vein of research has analyzed the emotional dimensions of social class, including the influential work of Sennett and Cobb (1972) in their book, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. While Sennett and Cobb's (1972) work did not consider intersections of gender, their book outlines the "hidden" world of classed based emotions, arguing that the lives of working class people are infected by a fear of being judged against a hidden bar or standard by which they may be found inadequate, causing them to carry "hidden" weight and anxiety. More recent research has added to these ideas by emphasizing how class is constituted affectively and culturally, through symbolic boundaries and meanings (Bettie, 2003; Reay, 2005). When understood from this perspective, class is experienced and reproduced beyond more simplistic facets of economic standing, through more complex facets of people's emotional lives and sense of self. Put another way, the girls' emotional responses to class and class inequalities contribute powerfully to understanding

114

their developing subjectivities, how they understand their worlds, and the possibilities and limitations they perceive for their futures.

Also noteworthy in Megan's narrative is her description of tourists as "richer but not richer." When I ask her to clarify what she means by this, she speaks only to the ways in which the tourists are richer, pointing to Toronto, as an example, where there are "more people that have more money in it." As I read back on this discussion now, I regret having not probed further about her perspective on how tourists are "not richer." While I cannot presume to know what Megan meant in this moment, her narrative suggests that, while tourists may be richer in economic capital, the people of Nature Valley are richer in other ways, taking economic capital off the pedestal, and giving value to her community's "richness."

Speaking, yet again, to a class disparity tied to urban power, entitlement, and economic capital, Stella told me a story during our second interview that provided a more concrete example of how such perceptions are affectively experienced from her place-based standpoint.

I think city people are just a lot more entitled. Actually, this is kind of interesting. When I was working at the chip truck last summer and there was one day I was washing the outside of it and this guy comes up to me and he's like, "You know, I just really wanna commend you. It's really great when I come up here I see all the kids working" things like that, "I see all these teenagers hard at work and I think that's really great for you," stuff like that. It felt kinda good when he said that but you know, sort of like, you know, the rich kids in the city don't have to work

summer jobs. That's just not a thing I guess. Yeah, definitely, living here you sort of, I don't know, working jobs at a younger age, like, now I'm working at the other ice cream store, and the owner's daughter is working with us. She's twelve. She seems more mature than that. Like, I was really surprised when someone told me she was in grade seven. I guess if it were anywhere else she wouldn't be allowed to work, but since she's family it's okay I guess. I think we learn at a younger age how to support ourselves probably, you know, we're not as rich as the city people and you know, I would say my family is really well off but still, we go out and get summer jobs, too. I think it's definitely something that most kids our age should be doing. Like, even if it's not saving up for school or something like that. If your parents can cover that, that's great, but you should still probably work so that you know, you have that freedom to get your own things.

Like June, Stella expressed a sense of pride in a hardworking and industrious lifestyle. However, while she initially interprets the tourist's "commending" of her hard work in a positive way, her interpretation ultimately turns to one that sees it as a backhanded, patronizing comment that reflects the privilege of the person making it. Stella reveals an emotional response to the reproduction of social class. Her narrative reinforces the affective complexity of the hidden injuries of class as she displays a sense of a threatened pride, combined with resentment toward and envy of the "rich kids in the city." While the girls' understandings of city life reveal the seduction of wealthy lifestyles, Stella, like June, remains a firm defender of her rural community and the lifestyle that it represents. According to Massey (1995), the social definition of place involves an active process of

116

exclusion, and, in that process, the boundaries of place, and the imagination and building of its character, are indivisible in defining who is an insider and who is not; of who is local, and what that term should mean; and who is to be excluded. It is a space of bounded identities and a geography of rejection. In other words, the girls, in part, are creating their subjectivities in and through this process of defining place, in opposition to "others" located outside of their spatial boundaries.

By characterizing their rural identities as small town girls who connect to nature, maintain close family connections as well as a sense of pride in hard work, these Spring Creek girls resist the disadvantaged, "redneck" pathologies that are projected onto their community and give value to their own sense of place. In light of the urban-centric (mis)representations of small town citizens as rednecks, and of their everyday lives in general, along with the girls' resistance to others defining them by their location, I let the following narrative stand alone as I conclude this section by returning to the beginning. The following excerpt is taken from our first focus group session, and responds to the first question I asked the girls: why did you volunteer for this study?

Stella: Cause people have the worst perception of what small town life is, especially in movies and stuff, it's so like glorified [Jessica laughs and agrees]. It's just like annoying and I don't know. It's kinda cool to get the chance to talk about it.

Researcher: What do you mean it's glorified?

Stella: You know, it seems like it's an awesome thing. I mean, okay, I like living in a small town, but it makes it seem like it's so like cutsie and, I don't know.

Also in like movies and stuff they say it's like supposed to be a really small town and they'll show a sign with a really small population and then you'll see like city transit and like all this stuff going on. It's like, this is not a small town.

Skids

The girls' narratives around tourism and urban supremacy suggest a geographical and classed "us" and "them" boundary, where "us" represents Nature Valley's rural towns of Spring Creek, Riverside and Bay Lake, collectively. And while the girls of Spring Creek suggest a collective resistance against degrading, redneck pathologies mapped on to their small town culture, another prevalent, more localized social hierarchy becomes apparent during the course of this study, namely, one that positions the people of Spring Creek at the bottom, as "skids." This internal hierarchy is frequently brought to the forefront of our conversations and is highlighted during our second focus group session when the girls asked to talk about stigmas attached to small towns.

> **June**: Well, when I went to that mental health group thing on Friday, me and my friends were sitting in front of a group of Bay Lake girls and like, the speaker was like, "And we've got Riverside" and everyone was like clapping. Then they said like, "And we've got Spring Creek" and the Bay Lake people behind us just go, "That's skid turf." So I turned around and I was like, "I beg your pardon?"
> **Stella**: Did you actually say that?
> **June**: Yeah. I turned around and I was like, "I beg your pardon?" And they're like, "Are you from Spring Creek?" And I'm like, "If I wasn't, do you think I

would be saying something?" And then they just kind of like, shut up and put their heads down, but I was like, "That's what I thought." Like, don't say that stuff about where I live. Cause it's like, we're small so I guess everyone thinks like, all of us here do drugs or something and we're skids.

Within ethnographies of schooling and identity, attention has been given to the make-up and workings of internal social hierarchies (Bettie, 2003; Morris, 2008; Willis, 1977). Such studies analyze how symbolic boundaries are drawn around groups of students, often in ways that reflect divisions of race, class, and gender. Focusing again on class divisions, the idea that Spring Creek citizens are considered "skids," when compared to the neighboring towns of Riverside and Bay Lake, was pervasive amongst the girls. The girls referred to Bay Lake, the most populous of the three towns which is approximately fifty kilometers away from Spring Creek, less frequently than Riverside, which is less populous than Bay Lake but more populous than Spring Creek and approximately ten kilometers away. The town of Riverside seemed to hold a more significant comparative meaning within the internal social hierarchy for these young women, perhaps due to a closer proximity and familiarity. However, as evidenced in June's story, in this instance, it was a girl from Bay Lake who labeled Spring Creek as "skid turf," after celebrating the attendees from Riverside. Also important is the recognition of June's emotional connection to and protection of place through her demonstration of agency, especially in what may be considered a particularly difficult social context to do so, as suggested by Stella's surprised reaction. Also significant is June's pointing to Spring Creek's "small" size as the reason why "everyone" thinks they are "skids."

119

When comparing the towns in Nature Valley, discourse of a "bigger is better" power relation, along with the better resources available in "bigger" locations, emerged as a central factor in perpetuating the skid stigma attached to Spring Creek. These socio-spatial boundaries within the region of Nature Valley, creating a size-based internal ranking system amongst the small towns, was brought to the forefront of discussion, again, during our fourth and final focus group session. As requested by the young women, one of the topics of discussion during this session was how girls influence and look up to one another. The following narrative, taken from this focus group session reinforces the social ranking system attached to places within places, and the significant influence of such hierarchies on the girls' forming subjectivities. I note here that Wood Bridge, referenced by Megan in this excerpt, is a small community within the widespread geographical boundaries of Spring Creek, located twenty kilometers outside of the town centre, and home to approximately three hundred residents.

> **Stella**: I would say, if you consider Riverside to be a small town, I think they influence us more than we influence them.
>
> **Sarah**: Oh yeah. Cause there's more of them. Yeah, I see where you're coming from. I don't know. Riverside has always seemed better than us.
>
> **Stella**: Yeah, they're like the popular, preppy girls.
>
> **Sarah**: Yeah.
>
> **Stella**: Like, if we were all in one school together, they would be the popular girls and we would be the average girls. The Duffs.
>
> **Jessica**: Skids versus preps.

Sarah: Yeah, the Duffs. I'd say we're probably more influenced by them sometimes.

Megan: But Spring Creek has definitely influenced Wood Bridge more than Wood Bridge has influenced Spring Creek.

Stella: Wood Bridge isn't even a real thing though.

Jessica: It's almost like a ranking of towns.

Megan: It is.

Jessica: I think it's like a ranking. Like this area influences this area, but not necessarily the other way.

Researcher: Okay, does it have to do with size then?

All: Yeah!

…

Sarah: Like, you were considered really cool if you were friends with all the girls and guys at Riverside High. Like, if you were close friends with them. That's what I always thought. Like, in grade nine and ten if there was a person in our grade here who had close friends or knew people who went to Riverside High, especially if they were older, then that was really cool. And Bay Lake was even cooler.

Stella: I don't know anyone from Bay Lake.

Sarah: I don't know how Bay Lake works, but I've heard that if you're intimidated by Riverside High, like this is Spring Creek, and Riverside, and then apparently that's Bay Lake [stacking her hands, one on top of the other, in mid-air].

> **Stella**: Yeah, but Bay Lake is like not even on my radar. Maybe Spring Creek is
> to Riverside as Riverside is to –
>
> **Sarah**: Bay Lake. Yeah, that's what I've always thought kind of.

The girls explicitly outlined the socially constructed ranking system amongst Spring Creek, Riverside and Bay Lake, where their town of Spring Creek, the smallest of the three, ranks lowest. Their narrative further reveals a complex turf politics, whereby territory and social identity coincide. It also becomes clear that such place-based politics extend beyond the three main town centres of Nature Valley into the communities that exist on the fringes. As Megan attempted to offer her perspective about how she has been influenced by other Spring Creek girls based on her home base in Wood Bridge, marking a further division of geographical and social boundaries within Spring Creek, Stella devalued Megan's location by commenting that Wood Bridge "isn't even a real thing." This disregard for the place Megan considers home reflects a reproduction of the socio-spatial marginalization at play between Spring Creek and Riverside, as well as between Nature Valley and urban centres.

One way that young people create subjectivities in and through space is by constructing boundaries and exclusions (Dunkley & Panelli, 2007; Hayes, 2004). In emphasizing how a subjective sense of place is constructed largely in relational terms, youth scholars examine how young people construct spatial boundaries to establish social groupings (Scourfield, Dicks, Holland, Drakeford, & Davies, 2006). For example, Matthews and Tucker (2007) propose the concept of "moral terroir" to describe a territorial marker that naturalizes a classed divide between young people "growing up on

different sides of the tracks" (p. 104). Using this analogy, the girls feel as though they are on the wrong side of the tracks, the side that stigmatizes them as "skids" when compared to the "preps" of Riverside and Bay Lake. The girls map these socio-spatial stigmas onto their own understandings of themselves and a place-based girlhood, maintaining that, if they were to share a school with the Riverside girls, the Riverside girls would be "popular," and the Spring Creek girls would be "average," or, the "Duffs." Drawing on the title of a recently released teen comedy, *The DUFF,* which stands for the "designated ugly fat friend," this self-deprecating description suggests an internalizing of the stigmas attached to the constructed ranking system that creates spatialized relations of power. Spring Creek girls look up to Riverside girls, and regard them as embodying desired social and cultural capital, while viewing themselves negatively, in comparison. While they once spoke of banding together as a collective group of small town citizens, resisting the pathologies of a redneck stigma, these young women of Spring Creek stand divided on a more local level, negotiating yet another set of hidden injuries associated with feeling, yet again, lesser than.

It is important to note that, in some cases, the young women's envy of their Riverside counterparts did not extend beyond the noted social and cultural capital. Stella clarified this during our final interview together, as we began by discussing her enjoyment of the focus group sessions.

> **Stella**: They were good. I think we like, touched on everything that we wanted to talk about and a lot of things that were relevant to us. I feel like, the last one we talked a lot about us compared to Riverside kids and Bay Lake kids. Like, I

thought that was really relevant to us. Especially like, the other day, Riverside had their prom on Thursday, and just like seeing their pictures, it was like, I don't wanna say reassuring, but it definitely confirmed everything that we were saying about wanting to be like the Riverside girls.

Researcher: Is that how you felt when you saw the pictures?

Stella: Oh yeah! Oh yeah. They're just pretty. There's just something in the water in Riverside…We spent a lot of time talking about social media and like, how much Spring Creek girls looked up to Riverside girls or Bay Lake girls. I don't know, I mean, I don't even know if that's the best way to word it though like, "looking up to them." I mean, I know I've said that a couple times but just sort of like, it's almost, I don't look up to them in terms of their character or anything like that. It's just sort of like, they're pretty, and for some reason it's cool to be friends with people from Riverside.

Stella draws a distinction between "looking up to" Riverside girls for their outer appearances and the social capital that comes from befriending them, but not for their "character." This distinction can be read as a form of resistance and agency in maintaining a sense of pride and valuing her own moral or ethical qualities, beyond superficial traits. However, the embodied cultural capital and social capital that comes with being "pretty" and "popular" is of paramount importance to many adolescent girls. While it is encouraging that Stella distinguishes between deeper and more superficial qualities in "looking up" to the Riverside girls, resisting a totalizing idolization or imitation, it is also clear that she, along with the other girls in this study, focus more on,

and are more affectively influenced by their perceptions of "what" the Riverside girls are, and the socio-spatial privilege that represents, rather than "who" they are.

While the young women of Spring Creek are constrained by spatialized relations of power and a constructed ranking system, Riverside and Bay Lake youth are enabled by their privileged position within them. Riverside and Bay Lake youth are held on such a pedestal that simply knowing or befriending them positioned Spring Creek girls as "really cool," bolstering their own social capital. In this vein, Corbett (2007b) observed how privileged levels of economic and cultural capital provided some students access to a differential sense of social space that enabled them to navigate among various social groups in their school. Although much of the girls' discussions around Riverside and Bay Lake's elevated positions of power and influence centred on factors of size and cultural capital, the following excerpt, taken from our first focus group session, has more explicit class undertones, speaking to a disparity in economic resources. As the girls explained how social media furthers an already existing sense of surveillance in Spring Creek, a gendered discussion of cyber-bullying emerged, and turned into a narrative of classed juxtapositions.

> **Stella**: Yeah, twitter. Also like Twitter fights. I also told her [i.e., me, the researcher] about the Nature Valley Teen page. You remember that, like on Twitter, the Nature Valley Teen page. They were adding a whole bunch of people. Well, it started at Riverside, and then a couple of kids, I know who it was but I don't wanna say, did it for here and um, I'll just say it was Tara and Bianca, and they would just like add a whole bunch of people like from our school and just

like say mean things. Let's say if it was someone's personal account they would sub-tweet them because you don't wanna, you know, start a fight. Yeah, like an anonymous account so you can just like add whoever you want and just bitch at them.

Sarah: It was like, yeah. It always starts at Riverside High.

Stella: Yeah, of course. There's those kids who just try to copy what Riverside High does. Yeah, this is what happens around here.

Megan: Small towns.

Sarah: Small town things.

…

June: It's like they're bigger so we have to prove ourselves.

Sarah: Yeah, exactly. And like, certain people I know in our grade have been here and then gone to Riverside High and certain people have not liked them and it's just started fights and, I don't know how to explain it really. Like, it can be, and especially when like people will be like, "Oh, parties. Riverside parties are way better than Spring Creek parties. Like, skids go to Spring Creek parties. There's all these skids in Spring Creek," that kind of thing.

Stella: Yeah, Spring Creek definitely looks like the skid town from the outside, but I don't really think it is.

Sarah: I think it's like, people just make it more dramatic than it really is.

June: Honestly, I think it's just like, we're closer here, but when you go to Riverside it's like, all I feel is negativity. People hate on each other and it's like, why are we skids when like, you guys just rat on each other and pick fights and

it's just drama? And then like here, it's like the only drama you have is with the Riverside kids.

Stella: Exactly!

Sarah: That's very accurate. The only time for us that stuff like dramatic happened here are when Riverside kids went to this school.

Jessica and Stella: Yeah!

June: They'll come here and like be best friends with Megan and then like, next thing you know, "Hey what's up Riverside kid" and then it's like, "I hate you Megan." Literally, it's like that. It's like they come here, they hate us, then they leave and now all of us are against each other. Or like, you fight with your friend because of a Riverside kid. I guess our towns are just like, not meant to collide cause they feel like they got the bigger school with the newer stuff and like, the higher education. They're gonna go everywhere in life and we're the small one that's like the footprint of the ant kind of thing that's going nowhere in life. And they always wanna like, overstep us.

Sarah: I think a lot of it comes from the fact that their town is bigger. I think now Spring Creek is starting to get more interesting things for youth, but I think, Riverside has like, they have a movie theatre, they have things like that.

Stella: It's a shitty movie theatre.

Sarah: It is, but it's there. They just have more things to attract youth than Spring Creek does. It's almost like, in our age group wise, like, Riverside is better cause they have more things, like their main street. Like, it's always been known that Riverside is kept to look nicer than Spring Creek. In the summertime they attract

more tourists kinda thing. I don't think it's necessarily that much different now, but before, like even when we were in elementary school it was just known that way, so now the stigma is still there.

This narrative recognizes and moves beyond the element of size, into a more classed discussion of economic resources and the material conditions that are created. Focusing on a disparity of aesthetics, as well as resources that "attract youth," such as a movie theatre, the girls further explain their place-based marginalization when comparing themselves to their neighboring towns, and how their towns "are not meant to collide." A significant factor in the socially created boundaries of place between Spring Creek and Riverside is Riverside's "bigger school with the newer stuff and the higher education." The new facility opened less than ten years ago, and is attached to the town's community theatre and recreation complex. Students have access to a pool, indoor running track, and full size gymnasium facility. The school contains state of the art facilities for a number of subject areas including science, technology, the arts, special education and athletics. The economic and cultural capital that Riverside's new secondary school represents is mapped onto its students' beings, creating a perceived embodiment of such capital, allowing them "to go everywhere in life," whereas the young women of Spring Creek are the "small ones, the footprint of the ant, going nowhere in life."

At an already complicated time for girls as they fashion their subjectivities in and through broader discourses of girlhood, the young women of Spring Creek are also negotiating place-based, gendered and classed stigmas, such as "sluts," "rednecks" and "skids." These young women illuminate how class is lived on a conscious and

128

unconscious level, as they recognize and are affectively influenced by their socio-spatial "ranking," yet they also reproduce class narratives through underlying emotional responses to their perceived social positions within the constructed hierarchies, as evidenced in their discourses of an urban supremacy, along with a "bigger is better" understanding of a more local geography. Their narratives reinforce the essence of Place Identity (Prohansky, 1978), where place is a psychological structure that reflects how physical environments of an individual's everyday life are actively incorporated into the self (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). The young women of Spring Creek work with and against the spatial discourses available to them as a way to create value in the places they call home, and in turn, to dis-identify from discourses that pathologize them. Such spatial discourses, and their materialization in girls' lived experiences, suggest multiple attachments that structure their present standpoints, understandings of themselves, socio-spatial "ranking", and, as such, their imagined futures.

Chapter 5
Escape

This final findings chapter ties together the discussions presented in the two preceding it and adds to an understanding of the challenges presented to rural adolescent girls. It explores how place is used to deal with those challenges and how the girls construct their rural surroundings as an idyllic space, and use nature as an escape in dealing with various pressures in their everyday lives. Building specifically on the previous chapter, I address, here, how the stigmas attached to the young women of Spring Creek not only affect their current understandings of themselves and their worlds, but also shape their desires in the future by contributions to the development of an understanding of life's possibilities and limitations. For many of the girls, their imaginings of the near-future begin with escaping the stigmas of Spring Creek, followed by a projected refashioning of themselves into the (urban) adult femininities that popular culture deems desirable. The young women invest in middle-class ideals of the "good life" and popular discourses of "girl power" that offer the seduction of unlimited possibilities of "success" for today's young women. Alongside their desired projections of the (mostly urban) "good life," the girls discuss the potential obstacles and failures that threaten to undermine their hopes and dreams for "success," often connected to their already lived experiences and current habitus.

An Escape to Nature

Recently, there has been an emerging body of literature that maps the connections between rural places and emotion (Power, Norman, & Dupre, 2014); however, like rural

studies in general, such literature examining emotional geographies of rural spaces has primarily focused on adults (Leyshon, 2008). Given that much of what is known about the affective dimensions of rurality is based on studies with adults, methods like photo-voice that allow youth to direct the research can provide data that problematize dominant understandings of the rural (Nairn, Panelli, & McCormack 2003). Moreover, in this study, the use of photo-voice methods privileges the young women's voices and standpoints, and highlights their emotional connections to the rural spaces encountered in their daily lives.

The girls' narratives, particularly those resulting from the photo-voice activity, which are the focal point of this section, align with what cultural geographers highlight as the mythic construction of the rural as an idyllic space, typically characterized by themes of nature, safety and community (Leyshon, 2008; Rye, 2006). In contrast to the dominant narrative of the rural disadvantage, outlined previously, the girls' photographic narratives illustrate the centrality of the discourse of the rural idyll. As the girls shared their photographs of places and spaces that are meaningful to them, their associated narratives showed significant investments in this discourse, particularly the element of nature, as their lived experiences are permeated with images of rurality that reflect an emotional attachment to place and space.

Megan, a proudly self-proclaimed "country" girl, brought three photographs to our third interview. All three photographs were of outdoor landscapes in the region of Nature Valley, including the following of her house where she lives with her mother:

Figure 6: Home

Well, this is behind the house. It's the road. You can kinda see it back here. That's the road so, this is behind the house. And then but, behind me is even more. There's like, all my bush and all my like, my shed and everything. So I just took like, this general photo. Um, I don't know, just, during really sunny days and especially at night, it's almost as good as the [natural light reserve] cause of the stars. And all these trees around here make a circle for the sky, so when you look up there's like, a big circle. And I'm usually, during the summer, right under the Big Dipper, so that's pretty cool to see. We've done a lot of work on it so I mean like, I've seen like, it grow throughout the years...This is just a pile of skids. And then there's my, Fernando's, the ox's trailer. And then back here is my trailer. Like, a couple of years ago I was obsessed with like, fashion designing so my mom found me this old trailer and I would just like, have all my designs in like, this little trailer for all my stuff. And then this is Bumpy, my red truck. He um, is a good truck. Toyota, of course. And this is the tent shed. We usually use it

just for storing stuff but my sled broke during the winter so now my sled's just chilling in there until we can fix it. And then, the driveway. And over here, that red thing, that's a chicken house. We don't really use it anymore unless we have like, quail or pheasants or anything. Then behind it, there's a little ice shack right there and that's the actual chicken house. I don't know. It's a pretty simple landscape. When you go back here there's like, the sugar shack and like, your pond and the rest of the bush…I've been living in it for ten years. Like, it's been through a lot with me and I just, I find it really comforting. It's just, a nice thing to go home to. It's just, home basically. Um, it's when you're there, it's in Wood Bridge so there's really all that, it's not busy. It's not loud. It's quiet and peaceful and there's like, animals and fun stuff. It's nice just, especially when it's a really sunny day, it's nice just to like, chill out. Tan sometimes. It's just a nice place to be, anytime really. Whenever you're like, angry or sad you can just take a walk. Like, my property is really big so, you just take a walk, and by the time you find your way back, you're good.

Megan's detailed narrative of her rural home, and its surroundings, sets the stage for a widespread theme of emotional connection to place and an escape to nature as a means of soothing (unfeminine) emotions. Megan exhibits a deep emotional connection to her home, noting that she's "seen it grow throughout the years" and that "it's been through a lot with [her]." This connection includes the physical structure of her home, and its natural surroundings. Megan has internalized and personified her surroundings and mapped them in a parallel manner to her own experiences of growth, thus reinforcing the emotional connection. Ansell and van Blerk (2007) claim that focusing on emotions

allows researchers to complement material considerations of place, such as the built environment, with an examination of those more transitory, but still crucial, emotional, cultural, and imaginative ties to place. Such ties powerfully shape how young people form their social relationships and social identities (Panelli, Punch, & Robson, 2007).

Megan also suggests a sense of ownership of her natural surroundings as she is explaining the various elements of the photograph, and says, "there's all my bush." Recalling that Megan lives on the outskirts of Spring Creek, in the community of Wood Bridge, and Stella's dismissal of her community as "not even a real thing," Megan's display of ownership may be in response to such dismissals, and a way of claiming and legitimizing her location.

Recent work on the affective dimensions of rural places focuses on the emotional lives of people as emplaced and examining how a sense of place and feelings of belonging (and exclusion) reflect and reproduce local power relations (Bryant & Pini, 2011; Pini, Mayes, & McDonald, 2010). Further to this, after carefully describing each item in the photograph, along with additional narratives of her affective responses to the sun, trees, animals, stars, and the "quiet and "peaceful" environment, Megan concludes by noting how she uses her natural surroundings as place to walk off unwanted emotions of anger and sadness. Megan's escape to nature as a means of dealing with such emotions, and the suggestion that being in nature has healing powers that can not quite be articulated, is a prevalent strategy and suggestion amongst the girls during each of our photo-voice interviews.

June's data for the photo-voice interview proved to vary in content from that of the other young women. Along with providing three photographs – one of her boyfriend's

134

bedroom, one of her hamster in her bedroom, and one of herself with her dog – June recorded a video on her cell phone from the passenger window of a car to capture a long stretch of road that had numerous significant points and off-shoots along the way. She asked that the video be the focus of our third interview, and thus, it was. As June and I watched the video together, she would pause it at various intervals, and tell me a story related to the paused image on the screen.

> **June**: So about here, it's a straight stretch here. Along it there's this field and beside it and me and my grandma, when I was little, we used to always take the horses and ride up in that field and around and stuff just to like, kind of calm down and blow steam. It's just, when it springs up in spring, it's so pretty. Like, all the flowers and the tree line and stuff like that, and like, the way the sun sets on it. I just, I don't know. I feel comfort there. If I'm overthinking or if like, I just need a place to go and relax, I can just go and sit there and like, I guess escape my thoughts. Just kind of like, enjoy nature and just not overthink really. Just sit there and go, "Ahhh, this is so peaceful. No one's bugging me. I don't have to listen to anyone."…It's kinda nice to live out in the country cause it's like peaceful, you can have your own time cause no one can find you and of course you'll be back. You can just wander off and no one will be like, "Oh, where is she?" It's like, "She'll be back" cause like, where can you go [laughs]. This is where I first learned how to drive the car. It's just like good family memories. If I'm fighting with my family I'll just walk down the road I guess and it's like, "Oh, I'll get over it."

Researcher: Does it work?

June: Mmmhmmm. It's like, it's blissful. It really is. You just, you walk and you can look around. Everything's just beautiful. It's like, you're in a bad mood, and you look at a flower and it's like, "Damn that's beautiful. How can I be in a bad mood?" It's just like, I don't know. It just calms my soul I guess cause it's like all this beauty surrouning me and it's peaceful and I'm by myself so I don't hear anyone yelling at me anymore. So it's just like, overwhelming I guess. It just takes the anger out of me.

Once again, the importance of the mother figure in girls' lives emerges in this narrative. June begins by reminiscing about time spent with her grandma, but her story quickly turns to, and continues to be one of conveying a deep fondness for the sights and sounds of rurality, locating her within the rural idyll. This spatialized discourse is most often characterized by themes of nature and safety (Rye, 2006), both of which are evident, and connected, in June's narrative. As she is explaining how she can "just wander off" without concerning anyone about her whereabouts, June points to a feeling of safety, one that is often tied to the idea that everybody knows everybody in the community. However, her discussions of nature are far more prominent in this excerpt. Detailing her naturalistic surroundings of flowers, trees, and the aesthetic beauty of the sunsets, June finds "comfort" in her "peaceful" surroundings, and immerses herself in nature to slow her thinking and "escape [her] thoughts." Like Megan, June points to anger as an unwanted emotion that an immersion in nature has the power to eliminate, if only temporarily. June suggests that her "blissful" and "beautiful" surroundings "calms [her] soul," and "takes the anger out of [her]." June's narrative speaks to an embodiment of her

136

rural surroundings, and, in particular, the aspects of her localized capital that are sought after by thousands of tourists each summer. Spring Creek, a place that the young women once discussed as marginalized, primarily on the basis of a lack of economic and cultural capital, is now being presented in a different light, one that holds the seduction of serenity, peace, and healing.

June's use of escaping to the nature surrounding her so that she does not "hear anyone yelling at [her] anymore" is echoed by another participant in this study as she showed me the following photograph she titled "Nature":
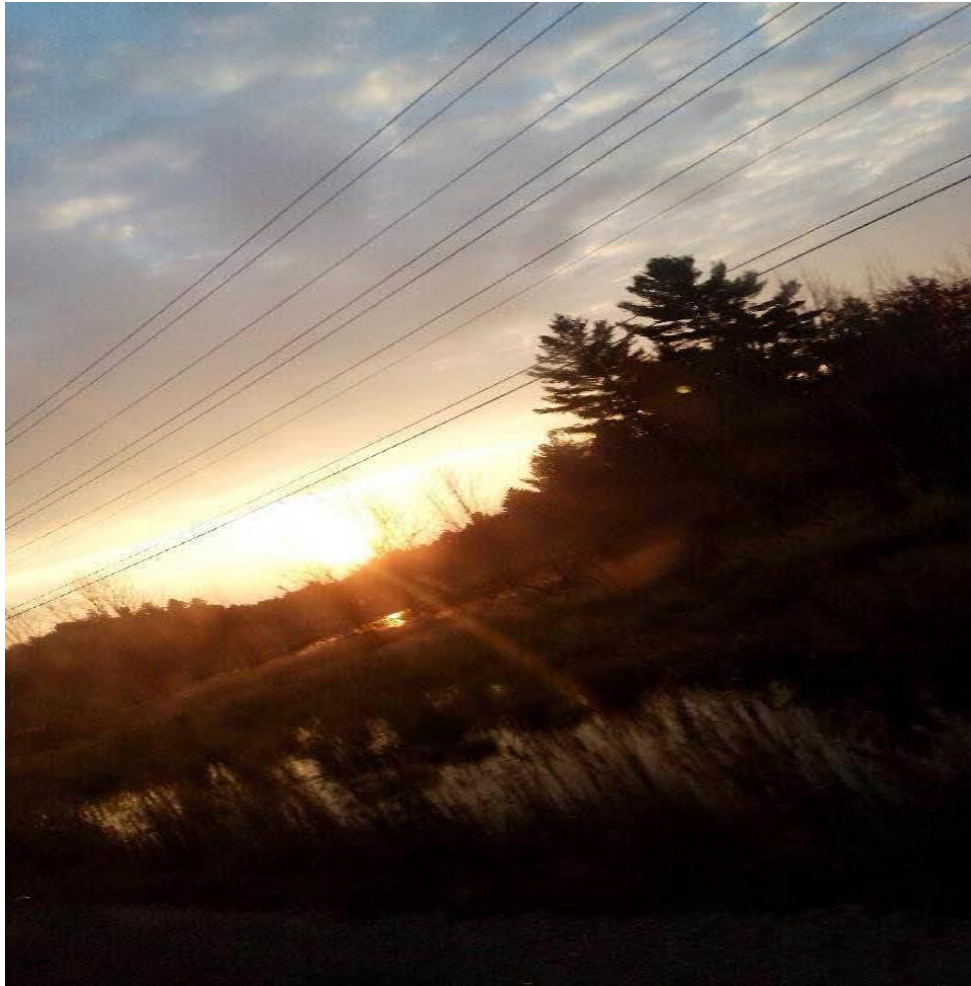

Figure 7: Nature

What it means to me is, um, well like, I love being out in the nature. Like, I love animals and I love taking nature walks. So, when I do that, it just helps with my frustrations and I go have fun. I'll see like, the ducks and all that. Sometimes if I'm lucky I'll see deer and foxes. It's just really nice. I guess cause like, when I'm out in nature, I don't hear anybody else yelling or screaming. I just listen to all the birds chirping. It's just really relaxing.

At this point in my relationship with the young woman, I was aware of some of the trying circumstances she had endured in her home life, but I was not aware of the full extent of her troubles. As she showed me this photo, and spoke of her love for the sights and sounds of nature, and how being in nature and hearing the sounds of birds chirping drowned out "anybody else yelling or screaming" at her, I could only imagine what that meant, although I knew enough about her lived experiences to have genuine feelings of empathy. However, later in this same interview, she shared some very intimate details about her past and present circumstances, painting a more vivid picture of the yelling and screaming she was trying to escape. She first shared that she had not been living at home for more than three weeks as a result of her mother's boyfriend having moved in. She had been couch surfing while looking for a job so that she could afford to get her own apartment. And while she claimed to be happy to be away from her family home, she spoke of missing her younger brother, and the following narrative unfolded:

Participant: Sometimes it's like, I really wanna see him but other times it's a relief because my brother, since he's had to deal with like, abuse his whole life, he

kinda gets that way towards me some days. It's better for me not to be around it. Cause my brother is getting the bad habits of it and I feel like what he's going to be like when he's older. So I just try to escape all of it. That's why I won't go home because my mom's boyfriend was abusing her, so I will not go back home cause I don't want to deal with the abuse. I've dealt with it all my life and don't need it anymore. So I'm trying to make a big turn in my life.

Researcher: When you say you've dealt with it your whole life, do you mean from this particular boyfriend?

Participant: Um, my mom's ex-husband used to abuse her and he almost hit me a few times. I don't remember anything good that's ever happened. Cause I remember just screaming and yelling. Verbally abusive to me. It's not nice.

As this young woman disclosed these, and further details of her past painful experiences, I found myself emotionally distraught, and at a loss for words. I felt ill equipped in knowing how to proceed in these moments of our interview, as I am not a therapist, although, for this young woman, it appears as though nature is. Her escape to nature, where she finds temporary relief from her frustrations and can just "have fun," can be read as a therapeutic strategy in dealing with the turbulent circumstances of her daily life. Further to this, I argue that her use of such coping strategies is a display of resistance and agency. As she recognizes and turns away from the abusive relationships in her current daily experience, both literally, by moving out and attempting to support herself at the age of sixteen, and figuratively, by immersing herself in nature as a means of managing her emotions, she attempts to actively direct her own life. That said, factors such as geographical isolation from supporting resources, as well as feelings of surveillance in

rural communities, often inhibit girls in seeking help about issues related to violence and sexual abuse (Varpalotai, 2005). By removing herself from an environment that continues to be fraught with abuse, and strategically escaping to local places surrounded by nature to experience a sense of peace, this young woman demonstrates resistance and agency, also explicitly stating that she is "trying to make a big turn in [her] life." Such a statement implies an imagined change for the better in her future.

Returning to Prohansky's (1978) concept of place identity, Dixon and Durrheim (2004), more recently built upon this concept, and broke it down into four key components: a deep sense of familiarity or belonging arising from habituation within physical environments; an affective evaluation or emotional belonging with the environment; the ways in which environments take on symbolic meanings in relation to the self; and the role of the physical environment in enabling the achievement of projects related to one's identity. At times, the girls' photographic narratives related to an immersion in their idyllic, natural surroundings, suggest that, along with healing powers, these places present symbolic meanings of former and imagined future selves. While one girl's escape to nature elicited imaginings of a healed self, and better days ahead, Sarah's escape to nature evoked a sense of grievance for a former self, and the simpler times of the past:

140

Figure 8: The Point

Um, so this is the point. I don't really know the actual name for it, but we call it The Point. It's at the wharf. It's like a trail, it's a little trail up the rocks, and then you kinda just walk straight and there's a children's memorial. That's what that little thing is. A lot of tourists go up there too. I guess it's kind of a known trail. It's really pretty. I picked it just cause like, I think every summer since grade eight, my friends and I have gone up there all the time in the summer of the past five years. It's just a lot of fun up there. You can jump off the cliffs and stuff and

just hang out with your friends. For me it almost represents the end of the year. Cause I think for the past like, since high school, since grade nine, my friends and I have gone there after every second semester exams. Like, as soon as they're done we've always gone there and just hung out the whole time. So it's almost like, every time I think of it, it's really nice cause it's like, a really de-stressful place. I think of that and I think of summer and fun with my friends and stuff. And I even go there sometimes just like, by myself. Like, I went there last Saturday night and it's just a really pretty place. It's calming. Especially right now since tourist season hasn't really started, so not a lot of people go up there. There's like, there's some trails. And there's other spots on the little rock island thing. It's just really calming and nice. I really enjoy it there…It kind of like just keeps me less stressed cause you know, summer there's no school. And I tend to get really stressed out about school. It just kinda reminds me of like, good, fun summers with your friends, especially summers before we started working and had to do all these things, and university and stuff, when it was just like, we could hang out every day. So it's nice.

Sarah's accompanying narrative to her photograph reinforces the significance of transitional periods in girls' lives. Contrary to the girls' widespread narratives of reflecting on their younger selves with feelings of shame and embarrassment, resulting in a welcomed dismissal of their younger identities, Sarah's excerpt of this "calming" and "de-stressful" place evokes a lamenting for simpler times of her past. While Sarah continues to frequent this "pretty place" on her own to experience its "calming" effects, most of her discussion centres around the symbolic meaning of this place as one of fun

times with friends, particularly those times before the pressures of working and preparing for university were a part of her daily life. Sarah's fond memories of this idyllic place, and of her younger, carefree self, intersect with her current use of an escape to nature to help her feel "less stressed out." Similar to Megan's narrative of an internalized sense of place that has grown with her, as Sarah transitions and changes throughout periods of her life, so too does the symbolic meaning of this place. Specifically, Sarah currently points to school as the catalyst of much of the stress she attempts to subdue in her quiet moments alone in this space.

Discourses of "successful" girls have been prevalent in academic literature for the past two decades and have often focused primarily on educational attainment; however, within such one-dimensional celebratory discourses of high attainment, less attention has been given to the emotional, social and psychic consequences and sacrifices for high achieving girls who have only relatively recently made inroads to the territory of academic success (Epstein, Elwood, Hey, & Maw, 1998; Francis & Skelton, 2005). Another facet that may be added to this list of less frequently charted academic area is work to investigate the strategies young women use in their daily lives to cope with the emotional, social, and psychic costs related to the pressures of academic achievement, among many other demands. As a grade twelve student in her final few months of secondary school, Sarah often spoke of a range of emotions associated with her upcoming transition into young adulthood and university. Her feelings ranged from excitement and curiosity, to fear and anxiety, but she spoke of her concern for maintaining good grades most frequently. As Sarah immerses herself in the idyllic surroundings of "The Point" now on her own, it represents a place of transition, evoking fond memories of a simpler

past, and is used as a strategy in the present for soothing the anticipated pressures inherent in the transition to come. Leyshon (2008) suggests that while it is important to recognize that subjectivities and places are socially and historically conditional, flexible, and changing, individuals locate themselves firmly in historical time and fixed places to ensure a sense of emotional well-being and belonging and "to cope with the contingencies of existence" (p. 5).

Despite the girls' narrative consistency in a construction of the rural idyll, it would be a mistake to interpret their investments in such a construction as an accurate depiction of their lived geographies (Cairns, 2014). On the contrary, fruitful analytic space exists between dominant spatial discourses and the everyday experience of place (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). However, what is consistent is their turning to nature as a way to escape, if only briefly, thoughts of stress, anger, and sadness. As the young women embed their identities within the rural landscape, a gendered mapping emerges in their narratives of rural spaces. That is, as the girls experience negative emotions that are met with a lack of acceptance for young women (Gilligan, 2013; Way, 2013) (even as they negotiate a variety of pressures and challenges in their past, present and imagined future lives, including family and school pressures, as well as emotional and sexual abuse), they escape to their natural surroundings, a localized capital, as a means of quieting the noise of their thoughts and coping with the tensions of their daily adolescent lives.

144

Escaping Stigmas

Popular discourses of the rural rely on imagery that present the countryside as a place where happy, healthy lifestyles are lived and where those who inhabit it can enjoy the advantages of trouble free environments, away from the stresses and uncertainties of an urban chaos (Cloke, Phillips, & Thrift, 1995). Such notions of rurality harbor a sense of the rural as a sealed off idyll, removed from the wider material influences of urban society in general. However, the young women in this study were not segregated from urban society as mass media, the regular influx of urban tourists, and a number of other influences, had significant impacts on their future imaginings of place, primarily in an urban "elsewhere." While the girls spoke quite fondly about the aesthetic qualities of their natural surroundings, and were appreciative of the sights, sounds, and their soothing effects, for many of them such qualities were not enough to foster a desire to remain in, or return to Spring Creek in their imagined futures. Five of the seven young women in this study were adamant that their imagined futures would include living the "good life" in a city, after getting a good education and good job, traveling the globe, and getting married. Further to this, the place-based stigmas already discussed were a significant factor in their motivation to escape the rural, and refashion their femininities as urban.

As we were nearing the end of our second focus group session, after the girls had discussed the stigmas of being sluts, rednecks, and skids, I asked if there was anything else they would like to add, and Jessica sparked the following conversation:

Jessica: I think people assume that we're not gonna go anywhere in life just cause we're from a small town.

Stella: Yeah, stay in Spring Creek forever.

Jessica: Yeah. We're gonna stay in Spring Creek forever and like, work at McDonalds ™. But, I don't think that's true. A ton of people leave here because of that.

Researcher: Has that idea that nobody leaves here and everybody just kind of stays here and works at McDonalds ™, as you say, has that affected you or motivated you to - [they all jump in]

June: Oh yeah!

Sarah: Yeah!

Jessica: Yeah, it motivated me to leave.

Sarah: Yeah, to like go to University. Like, I've known since I was little like, I wanna leave and at least like, experience life outside of Spring Creek and see what it's like. So it's really motivated me to try and do that.

As shown in this excerpt, many of the girls emphatically expressed their wish to escape place-based stigmas as motivation for mapping their futures outside of Spring Creek, claiming that many people leave the town for that reason. The young women expose a more general stigma that equates small town youth with limited future educational and career endeavors, bound to working-class lifestyles often associated with rurality, while connected to classed elements of the specifically named stigmas of being rednecks and skids. Their future imaginings of self, then, are inextricably and negatively connected to place, and based on the assumption that a change of place will result in a change of identity. Such a conclusion supports Prince's (2014) argument that "critical intellectual understanding of place as an agentive component of self-concept formation may be

particularly important in relation to youth who are developmentally situated to be grappling with questions of self" (p. 699). In other words, when considering the developmental and material paths and standpoints of the young women in this study, place is a crucial factor, and is embedded in how they understand themselves in the present as well as who they imagine themselves becoming in the future. For many of the girls in this study, their future imaginings of self, and, inherently, place, are consciously created in juxtaposition to the place-based stigmas they wish to shed.

As many of the girls spoke excitedly about their imagined futures outside of Nature Valley, and the place-based stigmas as central in their motivation to leave during this particular portion of the focus group session, Megan sat quietly, attentive to the discussion, but unusually silent. At this point in the research study, I had learned enough about Megan's life to know that she was deeply invested in her rural roots, and proud of being a "country" girl. I assumed that her silence was due to a difference in opinion from the other girls, being offended by the views of others or upset about being perceived as "not going anywhere in life," in the context of this conversation. During our fourth interview together I followed up with Megan as we discussed her plans for her future, and the challenges she imagined she would face throughout her transitions.

> **Megan**: I'm in mostly academic right now, but because I'm taking college I can do applied and it'll be the same thing. So next year I switched most of my classes to applied. But because I'm used to the academic, my expectations will be as high, so I'm hoping to get better marks. Say in English I get a 70 right now, but if I'm in applied then I might get an 85 or something. So I'm excited for that. And

colleges really only look at your averages in grade twelve which is nice. And then if I go to [Midtown], it's mostly just gonna be the money situation. Cause my best friend, her dad owns one of the res houses, so what she's doing is, her dad is already expecting me to live there and so she's going to try to get me a discount and everything. And it's only like a ten-minute walk so I won't have to pay for parking or anything, which is nice. Other than that, my mom made the Dean's list when she went through her nursing, so I feel like that's kinda going to be a pressure to do as good as my mom kind of. But other than that, um, I think it will be ok, which is nice.

Researcher: Okay. Beyond that, if you can picture yourself graduated on the Dean's list, what other things do you see in your future beyond college if you had your ideal wish?

Megan: If I had like, my wish, I would still be in the Nature Valley area. Probably Spring Creek or Riverside, I'm hoping, just cause I grew up here and I haven't really been anywhere else. I'm hoping it'll be like, kind of in like the Wood Bridge or Spring Creek area because in Wood Bridge there's a whole bunch of snowmobile trails. I really hope to bring my children up being able to do a whole bunch of those fun things that I know a lot of town people can't do because they live in town. Like, where I live right now, it's ideal because I've got the pipeline so I don't need a permit. I don't need to pay for that. I just need to pay for my gas for my sled. And it's like, two kilometers and there's trails and everything. But if you live in town you've gotta pay for your sled and your sled sticker and your permit and it's just a lot of money. And then for the summer

time, I'd like to live near a river or a lake. I think that'd be pretty cool. Cause I grew up swimming and I've always been in the water and I think that'd be a cool thing for my children to do. I don't know, I think I only want one because that'd be a lot easier, but maybe, I think it'd be better to have one, let them grow and be an only child for like the first five or six years, and then maybe have another kid so they're evenly - not evenly spaced, but like, I don't know. I just think that'd be a better option like, if I had my wish I'd probably just have one kid cause that'd be cheaper, and just a lot easier to concentrate on the one child instead of like, trying not to choose favorites, cause we all know almost every mom has to have one. But because my husband will probably want more than one kid, I'd probably settle for two. That would be ok.

Along with pointing to the pressures associated with achieving good grades and educational attainment, Megan, on multiple occasions, cites a sense of anxiety around economic stressors and challenges in her future, which also contribute to her desire to remain in Nature Valley after completing college. Her understanding of the "money situation" as being at the fore of potential obstacles in her forthcoming transition to post-secondary school, and beyond, contributes to a classed narrative of future imaginings, fixing her envisioned future location in Spring Creek. In her ethnography of girls' negotiations of subjectivity in a Vancouver secondary school, Pomerantz (2008) identifies related findings to class and place. She describes a double-ness of identity whereby girls experience varying degrees of fixity and fluidity in their multiple positionings, and where working-class (and racialized) students feel more "fixed" in social space than their middle-class peers. Similarly, in his research within a fishing

community in Atlantic Canada, Corbett (2007b) claims that students with privileged levels of economic (and cultural) capital had access to a differential sense of social space. Megan's narrative, along with these studies, suggests that among both urban and rural youth, systems of class (and race) shape young people's ability to navigate socio-spatial boundaries, influencing their current and future understandings of life's possibilities and limitations, of which place is a central factor. Further to her location of self, Megan's economic anxieties also influence her imagined future family life, where, if she had her wish, she would "just have one kid cause that'd be cheaper." As an only child herself, Megan maps her own lived experiences onto her future imaginings of her own family. As argued by Skeggs (1997), categories of class are, in part, reproduced at the intimate level as a "structure of feeling" in which doubt, anxiety and fear influence the development of subjectivity (p. 7).

Also important in analyzing how place has contributed to Megan's standpoint, and future imaginings of herself as remaining in a familiar place, is her noting that she has "never really been anywhere else." This statement reflects Bourdieu's (1992) explanation of habitus as the feeling of "being a fish in water." That is, Megan's lived experiences and resulting embodiment of and affective connection to place have created a sense of comfort and knowing in her social and physical environment. Megan's habitus is a product of her historical experiences, in particular, socialization within the family, and is continually re-structured by her encounters with the outside world (Di Maggio, 1979). Put another way, Megan's desire to remain in Spring Creek may, in part, be a reflection of a social position from which her habitus was constructed; however, one's habitus also

includes the creation of new responses and understandings, capable of transcending the social positions in which it was produced (Bourdieu, 2000).

For the rest of the girls in this study, the desire to transcend the social positions in which their habitus was produced was a prominent desire, as evidenced in the initial focus group excerpt in this section. However, for many of them, their life's experiences had allowed for particular insights into ways of living outside of Spring Creek. For example, Sarah had extended family who lived in Toronto, and whom she visited on a relatively frequent basis. Recalling her photographic narrative of "The Point," and her investment in the rural idyll as she spoke of its beauty and symbolic healing powers, her subsequent photo and accompanying story stand in contrast to her current understanding of herself and her world, highlighting an imagined urban future.

Figure 9: Toronto
(Retrieved by informant from
http://icwphotography.photoshelter.com/image/I0000tarb9Cfz_nE)

Sarah: I didn't take these pictures. I chose those pictures because like, in the

future, even though I'm going to St. Catherine's, I hope to eventually live in

Toronto. I mean, most of my family is there. And I've mentioned before, I've

always wanted to try living in the city and see what it's like. I chose the picture of

Dundas Square just cause I always, whenever I go the city I try to go down there.

It's really nice. You know, there's restaurants around and there's movie theatres. And in the summer it's nice cause they have little tables set up. I just love the whole idea of like, being anonymous. Like, it's so opposite to Spring Creek. Like, no one knows you. It's very unlikely someone's gonna come up and be like, "Oh, hi." Not that there's anything wrong with that. Just cause like, sometimes Spring Creek can be so tiring that way where it's like, everyone knows and everyone knows about everything. So it's kind of nice to just like, sit there and no one knows you and kind of be with yourself and your own thoughts and like, it's really good for people watching, which I really like to do. I think it just kind of represents just kind of nervousness and excitement too. Just cause like, I really wanna live in Toronto. And I think I'll like it but I mean, there's still a chance that I might not enjoy living in Toronto. But, I don't know. I'm excited that hopefully one day I'll get to do that.

Researcher: Does the city represent anything else to you?

Sarah: Um, I think like, just a different lifestyle. Like, it's more fast-paced, which I'm looking forward to. I really want to be involved in that. Definitely more opportunities than Spring Creek. I think, you know, it's a city, so you're used to seeing crazy things. My nana always tells me, she lives near Dufferin, and she always like tells me she goes on the "sufferin' Dufferin" bus and she sees these crazy people all the time [laughs]. It's just like, there's so many different cultures and lifestyles there. Like, I mean, everyone can be judgmental, but I think if you find the place and the right people, it can be probably a lot less judgmental space than some of the experiences I've had here. I'm kinda looking forward to that and

hoping that happens to me cause I want to see what it's like. Definitely more opportunities I think. Like, being a girl in a small town like you can find stuff, but I feel like in a city there's more opportunities and I wanna just kinda see what can happen for me there. So I think it represents that too.

As Sarah constructs her imagined future in the urban metropolis of Toronto, she does so in opposition to her lived experiences in Spring Creek. She focuses on the undesirable characteristics of her current place, particularly, a lack on anonymity, culture, resources, and opportunity, and uses opposing visions to map her emplaced future. In part, her desires for an urban-based future are borne out of her lived experiences when visiting the city, creating a standpoint from which she is able to compare the disadvantages and benefits of each place, as well as understandings of an emplaced self, in more than abstract ways. Building on Bourdieu's (1984) forms of economic, social and cultural capital, Corbett (2007a) forwards the concept of "mobility capital" in his work with rural youth who were prepared to leave their local communities. Corbett's conceptualization of mobility capital can be linked to that of Bourdieu's (1997) social capital, in which he posits, "the volume of social capital possessed by a given agent...depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize" (p. 53). For Sarah, her network of familial social capital extends beyond Spring Creek, allowing her to mobilize to places and spaces beyond its boundaries, creating a mobility capital that significantly influences her desires and beliefs about the possibilities for her future. Her acquisition of such capital is aligned with Corbett's (2007b) suggestion that mobility capital is cultivated in some rural families through ordinary and habitual patterns of socialization

such as recurrent travel to distant places and connections to extended family living in urban places.

Although Sarah accessed a social and mobility capital that, in part, influenced her excitement for a firmly imagined urban and future self, her visions were not without feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, as she explains the idea of living in Toronto creates a sense of both "nervousness and excitement." As has been found in other studies on youth living in rural places (see, for example, Leyshon, 2008), the discussions about leaving their community were emotionally charged, with youth indicating feelings of anxiety, ambivalence, and enthusiasm about their future possibilities. For Jessica, also a grade twelve student looking to her near future transition into post-secondary education, such feelings of anxiety were also present as she imagined her future urban existence.

Figure 10: University of Guelph
(Retrieved by informant from https://www.examtime.com/blog/top-ten-university-guelph/)

Jessica: I feel like, Guelph is a city but it's kind of in between a city and town. It's just the feeling of it. It seems more like, comfortable. Not as busy I guess. Like, when you go to Toronto, downtown Toronto, it's like, there's so many things happening. But Guelph's kind of just like, calm I guess. So, that's part of the reason I like the school cause um, I just felt really comfortable there and in the downtown part. It just seems really like, not stressful at all. I don't think it'll be too hard of a transition.

Researcher: I remember you told me that you fantasize about living in New York.

Jessica: Yeah [laughing].

Researcher: So, is that something that perhaps, you thought about even further down the road, is that still something you want to possibly explore?

Jessica: Yeah, I think so. Like, I think once I go to Guelph, it's a little bit bigger than where I am now. I'll slowly like, move up to different like, sizes of cities and stuff like that. I wanna at least go there and at least see if I like it. I've always just wanted to live in New York I guess cause like, the job opportunities, and there's things happening. I don't know if I would want to live like, right in the downtown but, yeah. I don't know. It's just always been something that I've wanted to do.

Researcher: What was it that made you decide you want to go to university?

Jessica: I think when we're younger we're taught that the smart people go to university and the not so smart people go to college. And I kind of, when I got to high school, I learned that you can do either. It just depends on what you wanna do. But I was always, I always just had that feeling like, I wanted to do the top thing and the top thing was university. So I think that's probably where that started but, then I just kinda learned that it actually was what I needed for what I wanted to do, so it worked out. Yeah, I think I wanted to do that from the get-go just cause it seemed like the thing for the smartest people. They always go to university, like, that kind of stigma I guess.

Jessica's narrative, like Megan's, highlights the effects of habitus, where a feeling of being a "fish in water" creates a sense of comfort and knowing attached to place; however, Jessica's lived experiences of mobility, and her investment in a pointed

157

discourse of success as it relates to educational attainment, fosters a desire to explore the possibilities for her life outside of Spring Creek. Like Sarah, Jessica's lived experiences have taken her to a number of urban centres, as well as international destinations in Europe. However, unlike Sarah, Jessica's mobility capital does not create the same desire to immediately live in a "busy" urban centre. Rather, Jessica likens Guelph to a place that is "in between a city and a town," and one that feels "calm" and "comfortable." Her lived experiences and affective connections to the celebrated characteristics of the rural idyll have significant implications for her imagined place-based trajectory. Jessica suggests a desire to ease in to an urban lifestyle in her plan to "slowly move up to different sizes of cities." Returning to the "bigger is better" social hierarchy between Spring Creek, Riverside, and Bay Lake, Jessica's metanarrative of her imagined future mirrors her lived experiences within the socio-spatial ranking system of Nature Valley.

Anxieties and tensions emerged where local attachments, and motivation to detach from local stigmas, met dominant narratives of mobility that encouraged these rural young women to locate their futures elsewhere. These place-based tensions present particular challenges for girls, who must negotiate the gendered and social dynamics of their rural space alongside popular post-feminist discourses of "successful girls" and, consequently, "girl power," that seduce young women with the need for educational attainment, and the subsequent promises of unlimited possibilities (Cairns, 2014). The latter portion of Jessica's narrative reveals a deep investment in such discourses, particularly, "successful girls." Young women, like Jessica, are under exceptional and exacting pressure to understand their lives in line with a new post-feminist sensibility, ensuring that the educational arena for girls and young women is characterized by high

158

expectations and heightened self-responsibility. Along with negotiating the masculine qualities that must be juggled when aspiring to be a "successful girl," creating massive contradictions for young women (Ringrose, 2007), Spring Creek girls must migrate to urban centres if they plan to attend university, which, according to Jessica, is what the "smartest people" do. In other words, for those young women in the rural community of Spring Creek who subscribe to the "successful girls" discourse, alongside a desire to escape the working-class stigmas that pathologize them, imagining their futures elsewhere is as much a necessity as it is a desire.

For some of the girls, their understandings of "success" included and extended beyond educational attainment and into many desired characteristics of living a "happy life" outside of Spring Creek. For example, as June and I discussed her plans for the future during our fourth interview, she explained her thoughts.

Um, I like Spring Creek, but I truthfully want to see my share of the world. There's not a lot of good job opportunities around here. Like, there are, but there isn't at the same time. I'm interested in art. You don't see a lot of art up this way. You see a lot of art in British Columbia, or up towards Toronto. Like, stuff like that. So for me to be happy, I will have to leave for me to do a future that I want to be able to. I want to be happy. I want to be able to travel the world. I want to go to Rio. I want to see my life in another life kind of thing. Like, I've lived in this town my whole life. Maybe I need to spread my wings a little bit and go and live a life somewhere else and do some crazy art thing that I like there, and then go someplace else and settle down and have a family and live a little bit of an

artsy life there. Yeah, like I'll come back at Christmas and stuff cause my parents would die without me. But like, some people stay and some people go. But I feel like I'll be one of those people that go and like, kick off and have fun and come back. I'm so looking forward to my high school reunion. Just to see how many people actually left, cause everyone's like, "Oh, I hate this town." Just to see who actually left [laughs]. It's just gonna be so funny. I'm totally coming to my high school reunion. It's just, the people who say that, they never leave because they don't go to school so they sell drugs and they never leave [laughs]. So I'm gonna come back and see a bunch of my old friends like, fat and just chilling.

June begins by stating her fondness of Spring Creek, but quickly turns to a narrative of necessary mobility in her belief that her happiness is dependent upon her leaving her rural community, and creating a new life in an urban elsewhere. Her "happiness" seemed to first hinge on cultural employment opportunities, opportunities that she did not view as possible in her rural location. Her imagined future then progressed to a narrative of having it all, including a balance of marriage, children, and traveling the world. Unlike Sarah and Jessica, June's lived experiences have been limited in opportunities for mobility; nevertheless, she abstracted her future to include a wide range of places and cultures, highlighting the power of mobility and success discourses in girls' lives. Further to this, June's narrative points to her desire to escape and transcend the classed stigmas she believes are attached to Spring Creek. Her described imagining of coming back to her high school reunion to see "a bunch" of her friends who "never left and sell drugs" illuminates this, and arguably, is a significant factor in her desire to secure her social

position as successful, something that only seems possible in a change of location, or, in her own words, "wanting to see [her] life in another life."

Like June, both Stella and Julie also spoke of a future that included "having it all," and characterized by prosperous careers, successful marriages and family lives, and the ability to travel the globe at their will. The girls demonstrated a consistency in their understandings of what constitutes a successful and happy life as they plotted their futures along a series of collectively valued achievements and imagined experiences. These young women invested in classed visions of mobility that work to locate their futures within a (mostly urban) life that is characterized in opposition to the local stigmas they wished to escape, and includes excitement, diversity, opportunity, and success. As such ideals are relationally defined, they produced a set of imagined futures that were established around the seemingly inextricably tied binaries of the urban and rural, and success and failure.

Tensions and contradictions in the girls' spatial investments and related desired future embodiments must be read in relation to both the gendered context of rural social space, where masculinities and femininities are unevenly valued, as well the context of neoliberal discourses of individual success and upward mobility (Cairns, 2014). Such narratives have particular consequences for girls, who are positioned as the heirs of apparently unlimited opportunities made possible in a post-feminist world (Weis, 2008; Baker, 2010). Further to this more widespread positioning of today's young women as individually capable of having (and being responsible for) it all, the girls of Spring Creek are negotiating socio-spatial discourses and stigmas that further complicate their experiences of girlhood, influencing their understandings of themselves, their lives, and

the possibilities and limitations for their futures. These young women suggest an understanding of potential success and failure as a measure of their very selfhood, a reflection of their personal capacity to move outward and upward beyond the stigmas of their rural, classed location in the small town of Spring Creek. The following excerpt from my final interview with June sums it up.

Girls in small towns are stereotyped by the way people see them, but it's not true. We may be small, but we're independent and we do go far in life. And we are just as strong as a man is. Like, I'm not going to twiddle my life away in a small town like this, doing nothing but serving someone. Like, I'm gonna go out there and I'm going to start my own future. I'm going to be happy. You don't live and die in a small town. You live and express your life and you come back if you like it, or you don't. Like, just cause you're born and raised in a small town, doesn't mean you have to stay. Doesn't mean that it's your life. It's not. You can do whatever. It's where your parents chose to settle down and it's where you were born, but it doesn't mean that's where your kids will be born or that's where you'll die.

Chapter 6
Broadening Horizons

Learning Through Individual and Collective Voice

The purpose of this research was to give voice to rural young women in Ontario's near north, and explore factors influencing their understandings of themselves, their worlds, and their future goals and dreams, as well as their perceptions of life's possibilities and limitations. In giving the girls considerable control over topics discussed, particularly at the focus group sessions, I was able to better understand what matters in their lives and gain insight into both the material and discursive conditions that influence their understandings. The girls' understandings of their worlds, and their places within them, were temporal, connecting past, present, and imagined future selves. This became most obvious during our photo-voice interviews as five of the young women selected three photographs, each representing a meaningful place of the past, present, and future, without any directive to do so. Further to this, using photo-voice as a method allowed for the foregrounding of meaningful relationships in the girls' lives, including their affective relationship with nature, and the importance of their relationships with their mothers and mother figures. Exploring both relationships in further research would be worthwhile endeavors. Also noteworthy in these young women's narratives was the near absence of the significance of their relationships with their fathers. The significant influence of mother figures in the girls' lives highlighted this absence, causing me to question how father figures influence the forming of young women's subjectivities and understandings of what it means to be a girl.

In addition to these photo-voice narratives, all of the girls spoke frequently about who they "were," who they "are," and who they "want to be" in both interviews and focus group sessions. The girls understood themselves most consciously in relation to others, predominately noting similarities and differences of class and gender structures, and social hierarchies both within and outside of the spatial boundaries of their rural community. Less consciously, and in a more retrospective manner, as they moved through various fields, developed new friendships and romantic relationships, often requiring new and differing forms of social and cultural capital, these young women performed a fine balancing act of letting go of, holding on to, and concealing aspects of their subjectivities. Their understandings, then, required the occupation of multiple, and often contradictory, locations and subject positions.

Such understandings, in part, led to the manifestation of agency, self-direction and decisions about the creation of their desired futures. As the girls interpreted their material conditions and negotiated the discourses available to them, in turn, a consciousness of life's possibilities and limitations emerged. These young women envisioned their future selves, largely, in opposition to the place-based discourses they felt were stigmatizing. For example, while the "successful girls" discourse is most often characterized by educational achievement (Ringrose, 2007), for these rural young women, "success" meant more than receiving good grades and the attainment of a post-secondary education. This was certainly one aspect of their definition of success, but shedding small town "skid" and "redneck" identities was of the utmost importance, and escaping such stigmas was a more significant element of success for the girls, and thus disrupted the dominant narrative with its emphasis on educational attainment. The socio-spatial discourses

operating in the lives of these Spring Creek girls, discourses that they mapped on to the material conditions of their lives, factored largely into their assessments of limitations they would likely face. Remaining in Spring Creek was equated with a limited life, and leaving was the key to opening doors to a world of (urban) possibilities.

As the girls shared their past and present experiences, along with visions for their futures, a widespread sentiment among the girls emerged: "I had never thought of it that way before." As our time together lengthened, it became clear to me that this was as much a learning experience for them as it was for me. Nearing the end of the research process, I began to reflect back on the beginning. As we began our first focus group session, I had asked the girls why they decided to volunteer for this study. During that conversation, June shared the following observation: "We don't really get asked about ourselves that much, so when it comes to thinking about it, it's kind of weird, like sitting down and actually having to like think deep into what you do." As the other girls agreed, I was overcome with a sense of sadness, and this comment stuck with me as I continued to spend time with the girls in the months that followed. With their self-proclaimed new found ways of thinking, as well as their lack of opportunity to share things about themselves in mind, one of the last questions I asked each young woman during our final individual interview was whether or not they had learned anything, or now thought of anything differently as a result of our time spent together. Roxy responded in this way:

It was like an eye-opener. Like, sometimes we all have our own little

problems but sometimes our problems are related. Like, judgmental problems and

everyone judging us girls around here. So it kind of makes it, it's like kind of like

an eye-opener to all of us girls, realizing that we're not all alone, that there's other people dealing with the same stuff that we're dealing with.

For Roxy, the collective experience and the realization that she's "not all alone" was a significant factor in her learning experience and growth. Her comment speaks to the importance of young women coming together to share their experiences, and the potential that this sharing opens up for gaining new understandings about themselves, what it means to be a girl, and how they relate to others. This understanding of self and others may also provide girls like Roxy a lens through which to consider the structural limitations in life for women and how they might be challenged. That is, the girls were coming to see how their "personal troubles" are linked to "public issues" (Mills, 1959) or, as second wave feminists put it, "the personal is political" (Adamson, Briskin, & McPhail, 1988). Through this process of noting how problems thought to be personal or private are shared collectively and can be understood as the result of structural and systemic inequities, personal problems come to be seen differently and the girls can "open their eyes" and begin to consider how they can contribute to making change that would result in more hopeful possibilities in the future.

I note here that the learning and growth experienced by the girls through the expressions of their collective and individual voices mirrors some aspects of second wave feminism's consciousness-raising in the 1970s. Like our focus group sessions, consciousness-raising groups were voluntary and regular discussion groups that focused on describing and interpreting the experiences of participants, generally by discussing members' experiences around a defined topic (Firth & Robinson, 2016). Consciousness-

raising groups aimed to end women's sense of isolation from one another, and

encouraged them to feel more connected through human contact with other women

(Allen, 1970). The young women in this study also celebrated the opportunity to connect

with one another, to share their experiences and perspectives, and to get to know one

another in a more intimate and authentic manner than popular social media platforms can

provide or daily, casual contacts in schools allow. Further to this, as these young women

discovered they were not alone, that their personal problems were often shared problems,

they began to theorize their lives and unpack the discursive and structural conditions

partly responsible for the limitations they experience. It is through this interpretive lens

that new understandings and explanations are borne, ultimately, providing the girls with

"new eyes" for possibilities to do things differently.

Returning to Roxy's narrative, we can see how she also draws place into this

discussion as she refers to "everyone judging us girls around here." Yet again, the

concept of place enters the picture as a crucial element of self and collective

understanding. However, Roxy's comment speaks to place not only as a material space,

but also as an ontological structure. That is, Roxy's comment shows how a habitus is, in

part, created through the social reproduction of hegemonic ideas about another, more

metaphorical place, namely "women's place," a place characterized by stereotypes,

subsumed voice and subordination. Here, the centrality of acknowledging (young)

women's experiences, inherent in feminist standpoint theory, gives an added level of

theoretical rigour and gendered specificity to Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

Like Roxy, Jessica has an appreciation for the collective experience of sharing

through focus groups, and also expressed a more individualized learning experience in

167

her response to the same question about what the girls had learned from participating in the research.

> I think I've learned a lot about myself. I've never really sat here and talked about myself for an hour. And I've also learned a lot about different people. Cause, June for example, I probably never would have talked to June unless we had done the focus groups. Not cause I don't like her, just cause I've never really talked to her at all. But it's interesting to hear other people's points of view and how they think about things. I definitely learned more about myself. I definitely learned a lot. It's kind of funny. Like, at first I kind of felt weird, talking about myself for an hour. But now I'm like, "Yep!"

Part of Jessica's coming to better understand herself came from the opportunity to hear about other girls' perspectives and experiences. Like Roxy, whose "eyes were opened" as she saw herself and her world differently with the realization that she was not alone in having problems, Jessica's understanding of herself and how she relates to others also changed, in part, as a result of the collective experience. Also like Roxy, Jessica highlights how everyday experiences create a habitus and standpoint, and, additionally, how one's habitus can be challenged or resisted, and one's standpoint can be shifted, through collective understanding and action.

During our second interview, as Julie described some of her positive and negative experiences growing up in Spring Creek, she suggested that, in fact, this collective sharing of the female voice is needed in the school and community.

168

Julie: [We] need more help, like if you're struggling with stuff. I think that we should have more, like, other than [the school guidance counselor], we need more kind of mental and physical help. I feel like a lot of girls especially are struggling with that kind of thing and it's hard to get help.

Researcher: What other specific services would you like to have?

Julie: Maybe like a focus group, kinda like held at a hall or something like that, to talk about your experiences and stuff like that. I feel like that would be beneficial.

Based on observations such as this one, as well as a commonly expressed appreciation for the opportunity to connect with one another over time, I would argue that providing young women with opportunities, in both the school and community, to come together and share their experiences is an important way to foster meaningful and empowering connections for adolescent girls, supporting a relational style that privileges sharing and communicating (Gilligan, 1982), and, in turn, a move to action. Moreover, as Gilligan, Sullivan, and Taylor (1995) have argued, "Girls' active attempts to maintain connection with others and with their own thoughts and feelings, are acts of resistance and courage" (p. 27). Providing such spaces and opportunities for the development of meaningful connections, agency, and resistance within the school for these young women is of particular importance in light of the limited services that are available in many rural schools and communities, Spring Creek included.

For girls, the experience of having a space to talk about their lives can be very important. As evidenced in the participants' narratives, there are few spaces where girls can express their thoughts and feelings without fear of ridicule or censure. Such spaces

for girls need to be safe spaces and almost certainly require some facilitation by teachers or others who are well informed about gender issues and feminism. Those who are courageous enough to do this work can facilitate a safe space where girls can make connections with other girls, share their experiences, develop better understandings of both themselves and their worlds, and consider the limitations and possibilities in life.

The girls' narratives also provide a sense of lost individual voices. Jessica reiterated June's claim that youth are not often asked about themselves, when she stated that she has "never really sat and talked about herself for an hour," and that, at first, she "kind of felt weird" doing so. However, she quickly followed this up with her current feeling of a newfound confidence, as she claimed, "But now I'm like, 'Yep!'" Much like Jessica's response to one of my final interview questions, Julie also expressed similar feelings of confidence, a return to her voice and self, in her own reply.

> I've thought about myself differently. Usually I don't really open myself up
> to people. But I mean, doing this has kinda opened me to new things. And kinda
> like I mentioned, just cause you're a small town girl doesn't mean you can't do
> other things. It's opened me up to being who I am cause it's made me more
> confident in myself. Like, who would have known that I would have picked up a
> number and e-mailed you and done this. I like what we've done. Thank you.

As Bourdieu (1989) would say, when a girl's habitus encounters a social world of which she is part, she finds herself "as a fish in water" (p. 43). Expanding on Bourdieu's analogy, as the girls participated in the research activities, they became fish taking a

closer look at the water in which they are swimming, fostering shifts in their habitus, standpoints and, ultimately, understandings. Put another way, for girls like Roxy, Jessica, and Julie, participation in this research brought forth a move from limited to heightened self-understanding, development of a better critical sense of "waters" in which they found themselves.

Providing pre-adolescent and adolescent girls with opportunities to come together in a sharing of their individual voices, in turn creating a collective voice and shared understandings, can empower girls, offering them hope that, perhaps, the burdens of female adolescence need not be carried alone. Providing such opportunities for individual and collective voices is the impetus for ultimate empowerment: moving into action.

Broadening the Scope: Rethinking 21ˢᵗ Century Girlhood & Rurality

On the topic of voice, it is important to note that there is not a universal rural childhood and that (rural) youth do not possess one homogeneous voice or culture. There are many rurals, and, equally, there are many ways of experiencing rural life. The extensive and significant contributions feminist educators have made in identifying and redressing gender inequalities in education have often considered the intersections among gender and other elements of identity such as sexuality, class and race, but have rarely included rurality (Pini, Molestane, & Mills, 2014). This research has attempted to uncover the complexities of rural girlhoods, bringing both the girls' voices and the importance of place to the forefront, providing a "needed specificity to the very meaning of *girl"* (Rentschler & Mitchell, 2016, p.1), as well as an opportunity to rethink the meanings of rurality. As the study of girlhood expands, and the notions of rurality evolve,

171

it is important for future research to continue exploring the ways in which these social constructs intersect.

Also important to consider are the ways in which social media shapes and redefines these social constructs. This dissertation highlights the significant impacts social media has on girls' understanding of themselves, how they understand and relate to others, and how they construct visions for their futures. With respect to self and relationships with others, social media has redefined three important learning sites for the girls in this study: friendships with other girls, romantic relationships, and sexuality. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have changed the ways these young women communicate with and form relationships with their peers. In fact, when speaking about friendships and potential romantic interests, the girls regularly did so in the context of social media in that friendship was often measured by the comments or number of "likes" on a recent Facebook profile picture, and romantic interests were discerned by how quickly and frequently text messages were returned. In some ways, social media sites seemed to bring the girls in Spring Creek, and surrounding small towns, closer together, creating a false sense of "knowing" each other through available virtual information. In other ways, social media created a greater sense of social hierarchy as the girls of Spring Creek used it as a way to compare themselves to the young women of Riverside, Midtown, and "city girls," leaving them feeling like "skids" or "duffs," while also enabling further possibilities for surveillance in this small town.

As evidenced particularly by their photo-voice narratives, social media also influenced these young women's visions for their (urban) futures. Dreams of living and working in Los Angeles, New York City, and Toronto, for example, along with traveling

172

the world, were bolstered by information, images and videos proffered by what I will call a new virtual mobility capital. This concept of virtual mobility capital builds, firstly, upon Bourdieu's (1997) forms of capital, and secondly, upon Corbett's (2007a) concept of mobility capital. Corbett's concept, also building upon Bourdieu's theorizing, refers to a capital that young rural people acquire through ordinary patterns of socialization such as educational conversations and travel with family, as well as ties to extended family living in sub/urban places outside of their rural location, as they prepare to leave their rural communities. Adding the virtual component to this mobility capital allows for and recognizes the transcendence of familial socialization and economic capital barriers, allowing these young women to abstractly and imaginatively "travel" to an endless number of places via available technology. Such virtual explorations diminish spatial boundaries, provide external perspectives on their rural locale, and, arguably, are partly responsible for (re)defining their definitions of success and expanding their understandings of life's limitations and possibilities beyond what their material conditions might suggest. Further research is warranted to focus more specifically on the impacts of social media on rural communities and youth, considering, in part, the ways in which it can create feelings of either a diminished or an emphasized rural isolation, or both.

Feminism in the 21st Century. The plethora of available information, and especially the popular discourses spread throughout various social media sites, led to another unexpected, unplanned, yet popular topic of discussion amongst the girls: feminism. By the end of our second round of individual interviews, five of the seven girls had raised and discussed feminism without my asking any questions on the topic. And, as

173

illustrated in the girls' narratives quoted throughout this dissertation, they have developed budding feminist perspectives which may explain why they self-selected to participate in a study about young rural women. While I am not implying these girls' nascent feminist views represent those of all rural girls, or even all rural girls in Spring Creek, their interest in and use of some basic concepts from feminist theory are suggestive of the possibilities for changing the social relations of gender.

One of my first insights into the girls' interest in and perspectives on feminism came during my second interview with Jessica. As she explained how she "tries to avoid confrontation" but still feels she has a voice when it comes to "issues that target girls," I asked her what issues she was referring to, and this was her response:

Well there's the whole thing on like, the argument on feminism right now. It's like, everyone's arguing about that and, "Well, if there's feminism then why isn't there 'meninism'?" It's the opposite, apparently. But like, issues like that, they kinda get me angry cause people seem uneducated on what it [feminism] even is and then try and kind of bash it. But I feel like I could definitely talk about that to somebody and be kind of like, smart about it and know what I'm talking about. But just cause I am a girl it's like, people kind of look down on you when you're talking about things like that. They're like, "Oh, you're just a feminist" like it's a bad thing. But yeah, that's something that would be directed at a girl I think, or girls in general.

Jessica's response highlights, yet again, the on-going actions that work to suppress young women's voices. It is disheartening that Jessica feels as though others look down on her when she speaks out passionately about issues that affect girls. Also apparent from this narrative, along with those of several other girls, is the current popularity of feminism as a controversial topic discussed within peer groups. I began to wonder about the sources that sparked such discussion.

Since feminism emerged as a topic of interest to the girls, I brought it forth as one of our discussion points during the final focus group session. The following excerpt is taken from that session and begins to answer questions about how and why feminism was a topic receiving attention among young people.

Sarah: I recently have just been discovering feminism. I think honestly just this year. Like, I think I was always raised to be an independent woman and all that kind of thing, but I don't think it was really to the effect of feminism and how intricate it is. And I didn't really realize it till this year. And I think this year, like, from what I'm seeing, it's definitely having a positive influence on teenage girls. Like, just even discussing it with you guys and seeing people on Twitter talk about it just kind of around the world. Like, it's kind of empowering to people, which I think is a great thing. I think it also has a negative side.

Stella: I would agree with you that I'm just sort of learning this year what feminism really is. Like, the fact that it's about equality of the genders and not women over men. I think a lot of other people our age know that. I think now girls our age can be more confident in saying, "I'm a feminist." I don't know what it is,

but there was just a spark recently that everyone is now kinda talking about it on social media. She [Emma Watson] fully explained it. People don't want to say they're feminist because it's about hating men, which it's not. I think there has been a lot of awareness raising about the subject, and I think it's made a lot of girls more confident and comfortable in saying that they are a feminist or that they deserve to have everyone be a feminist.

Sarah: Yeah, and I think the biggest reason is because influential people like Beyoncé and Emma Watson and other celebrities are speaking up, which influences social media. And teenagers are so in tune to social media. Like, I'll see something on Tumblr and we'll talk about it the next day. Like, that's just the way it is. And I think what's also another good thing that's making us realize is like, yeah this is the situation in North America and we want feminism cause we want equal rights. But personally for me, it's also making me realize like, whenever people say, "We don't need feminism" I'm like, "Well, are you thinking about third world countries, developing countries, where women are beaten cause they can't walk up the street without a husband" or anything like that? So I think it's definitely opened my eyes to other situations in other countries as well. Adolescents in other countries too, because they have it worse off than we do.

I will avoid a lengthy, historical discussion here about feminist waves, but note there have been discussions about a recent shift from post-feminism, the idea that girls and women no longer need or want feminist politics (McRobbie, 2004), to a more recent

move toward the still somewhat ambiguous idea of a fourth wave of feminism. Fourth-wave feminism, a movement that is just beginning to develop, is primarily characterized as online feminism that uses forms of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr, as platforms for discussion and activism around issues of gender equality and social justice (Martin & Valenti, 2013). Whether or not this fourth-wave will be recognized as a legitimate social movement is unclear; however, what is clear is that the participants in my research cannot be labelled post-feminist and, largely as a result of access to information through the social media, have taken an interest in and see the need for feminist politics.

Of course, one could argue that learning about feminism from celebrities' Instagram posts may provide young women with inadequate information on the topic, compromising their understandings of its history, complexities, and intricacies. I would counter that, with respect to the many ways in which social media has been shown to negatively impact girls **(**Durham, 1999a; Tiggerman & Slater, 2014**),** positive learning, even if from celebrities, should be viewed as a step in the right direction, a direction that creates an awareness and level of engagement that develops into a thirst to learn more. These young women understand that feminism is about gender equality, and, for girls like Sarah, access to such information through social media has raised a more global awareness of the state of women, and fostered a more complex understanding of themselves as they relate to the world.

Although the girls credited social media for their emerging understandings of and desires for feminism, they also recognized that there was more to forming educated opinions on the topic than social media could provide. As the girls continued to discuss

177

why they felt feminism was important, their understanding of a need for further education became clear.

> **Sarah**: I saw a commercial on getting young girls more involved in sciences or something. She was doing some work on a science project or something, and the parents were like, "You shouldn't do that. You're a girl. Let your brother do that." It's just subtle things like where families, if you call a parent out on stuff like that, like, I call my mom out on stuff she says like that all the time. She'll be like, "What are you talking about?" I'm like, well that's just the way we're raised. Just subtle little things they say like, "Oh, you're a girl. You can't do that." Or, "Act like a lady." I think it's that kind of stuff that needs to be put aside. Cause it's like, "Well why can't I do that?" Or saying things like, "You throw like a girl." Like, why is that a bad thing? I think it's like the little things like that that just build up in our heads, especially in small town. A lot of it comes down from our parents cause that's the way they were raised.
>
> **Researcher**: Why do you think it's especially in small towns?
>
> **Megan**: Cause there's not much diversity here.
>
> **Stella**: Yeah, that's what I was gonna say.
>
> **Sarah**: Yeah, there's not a lot of diversity whereas like, maybe different cultures see things differently.
>
> **Megan**: And there's not much time or space or people even for small towns to evolve into like, being more feminist and equality and everything.

Researcher: So what can Spring Creek, as a community or school, do to make the situation better?

Stella: [laughing] I'm sorry, but I'm just like picturing maybe Heroes in the Hallway putting on some sort of "Yay feminism" day and getting knocked down so hard by the guys.

Sarah: Oh yeah!

Jessica: Mmmmhmmm.

Sarah: Well first I think if we educated ourselves somehow. If there was some sort of education, first in adolescence, cause I think that needs to start there because we are the future generation, and then from there go onto the older generations of Spring Creek. I think just really educating people first would be the best idea.

As we were all leaving the meeting room following this focus group discussion, the young women began to talk excitedly about wanting to have a gender studies course in secondary school. In my final interview with Jessica, which occurred after this focus group session, I followed up with her, as she was the only young woman whose final interview had not been completed at this point. Drawing her attention back to our focus group discussions outlined above, I asked her to elaborate on her thoughts about a gender studies course being offered in secondary school.

Jessica: I think it would be good if it [gender studies] was a mandatory class. I think it would take away the fact that a lot of people don't understand what it

[feminism] is. And then people could form educated opinions on stuff like that. If you went through that class and still disagreed then it would be more like, I'd take it more seriously. But when I just hear people saying they don't agree with feminism but they don't actually know anything behind it then it doesn't make sense to me. But I guess I'd respect their opinion more if they had been educated on it. But I definitely think it would be a good idea to have something like that. I think it would benefit a lot of people.

Researcher: So, if it were a class offered in high school, what grade would you place it in?

Jessica: Probably grade 11. I think it would work better with older students who are kind of more mature hopefully. But at the same time, it would be better to do it earlier so that people have that opinion right off the bat. So I don't know, maybe grade 10 or 11. Probably grade 10 would be the best cause it's your second year of high school. You're kind of taking it more seriously. I think it would be really good if that was a thing. Cause you can do Women's Studies in university, right? But I think it would be good to have both, like, gender studies.

The girls highlighted that, while they have been introduced to feminism through social media, and feel strongly about the need for feminist politics, more needs to be done in terms of raising awareness and educating people, youth, and others, particularly, those who reside in rural communities, on the importance of the topic. As Sarah suggested, this education needs to begin in early adolescence, as today's youth will become the parents and leaders of the next generation, and in educating youth, perhaps the cycle of "that's

just how we were raised" can be disrupted. Adding specificity to Sarah's narrative was Jessica's suggestion about offering a gender studies course in secondary schools.

Ontario's Social Science and Humanities curriculum includes HSG 3M, Gender Studies, a course not requiring a pre-requisite, making it accessible to all students. This course came to be included in the Ontario curriculum through the effective political organizing work of another group of young women, The Miss G__Project (Miller, 2008; "The Miss G Project," 2005), who were concerned about the absence of opportunities to learn about women and feminism in their high school programs. However, this course is not offered at Spring Creek Secondary School, which explains why the girls were unaware of the fact that there is an existing course. Given the clear call from the young women participating in my research for further education in the area of gender studies, I recommend that Nature Valley's secondary schools consider running HSG 3M on a regular basis, and/or intentionally build gender content into courses where there is a good fit. Moreover, rural schools should pro-actively find ways to offer the gender studies course and thus provide a space for students, especially girls, to explore and examine the social construction of gender and the material realities of life that are shaped by the lived experiences of gender.

It may seem peculiar that ethnographic research conducted in a school brought forth, relatively speaking, limited discussion about schooling itself. However, given considerable control over the topics discussed during the process of research, the girls directed their attention elsewhere. Apart from a call for offering a course on gender studies, cursory comments about favorable and less favorable school subjects, and the occasional comment about a sexist teacher or classroom experience, the girls did not

spend much time talking about their schooling. They were not oblivious to the impact of schooling on their lives, but it did not figure that largely in their conversations beyond the understanding that getting good grades was important and would shape the choices they could make about their futures. Moreover, as my analysis has shown, achieving high grades and completing secondary school was tied to a desire to escape small town stigmas, a motivation to create future opportunities for success.

Place-based stigmas, combined with the annual (urban) tourist colonization of Spring Creek that further emphasizes the injuries of class disparity, motivated these young women to imagine their desired futures in a primarily urban elsewhere. These young women's motivations are further complicated by discourses of "successful girls" and girls "having it all." However, as I reflected on the girls' experiences of feeling they were seen as skids and rednecks, often through the eyes of urban tourists, and their resulting desires to escape such stigmas, I could not help but wonder, what about the boys? Do they look to their male peers in Riverside as models of perfect masculinity, in turn, seeing themselves in a lesser light in comparison? Do they feel they are "less than" the wealthy cottagers? And, if so, does this impact their imaginings about the future? I believe that replicating this research with a group of rural young men would prove to be a fruitful endeavor.

Limitations of the Study

This research has made important contributions to understanding the complexities of rural girlhood, foregrounding the girls' voices and acknowledging the importance of

place; however, this study was not without limitations. Specifically, there are three areas in which limitations should be noted.

First, there were no participants in grade nine. Most of the young women in this study pointed to and spoke at length about the significance of moving from the field of elementary to that of secondary school, from pre-adolescence to adolescence, as a significant transitional time in their lives. Including the voices of young women in grade nine, who may have been experiencing the significance of such transitions, would likely have added more in-the-moment views on the topic of transitions, as well as a fuller perspective on experiences in secondary school.

Second, ethical limitations affected the data I was able to collect. As mentioned in chapter two, I was denied access to conducting observations in the school. Observations are an important part of ethnographic studies as they allow researchers to develop more holistic understandings of the phenomena under study, and can help in answering descriptive research questions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Ethical clearance to observe within the school would have provided me with richer contextual data for the girls' daily lives. I would have had access to their communication and interactions with friends, teachers, romantic interests, and each other. This knowledge would have provided me with more nuanced insights into their social worlds and added to the data collected from the interviews and focus groups. Observations may have facilitated deeper discussions and led to additional interview questions beyond those used in this study.

Finally, and as already noted, the young women spent little time discussing schooling. While the grade twelve girls did express feelings of excitement and concern around their near-future post-secondary transitions, schooling did not arise as a

significant factor in the girls' daily lives during our discussions. As I reflect on this fact, I note that I would not change the privileging of the girls' voices; however, I would have asked further specific questions about their school experiences to capture this aspect of their daily lives with more clarity and depth, and to provide more pointed recommendations for future research in rural secondary schools. Additional studies dedicated more specifically to schooling in a variety of rural sites would provide the data needed to develop deeper understandings of gender and rural education and facilitate policy making that would support young women as they learned to become women.

The Final Word

Not surprisingly, my participation in this research caused me to reflect on my own experiences as a rural girl, and how those experiences have shaped my current perspectives. While my role was primarily that of an active listener in the interviews and focus groups, inevitably my own life experiences were re-visited and I identified with the young women as they struggled to understand their worlds. Using Bourdieu's interconnected concepts of habitus, forms of capital and fields, and adding gender analysis through feminist standpoint theory to engage in conscious sense-making of the girls' narratives not only enriched my analysis, but was also cause for an awakening to and deeper understanding of my own life.

As I listened to the girls' stories, they were often able to articulate "what" they thought, but struggled to make sense of "how" they came to such understandings, or "why" certain circumstances existed. They were aware of gender differences, yet grappled with articulating how their perceptions of these differences came to be

internalized. Thinking back to my adolescent days, I, too, shared such struggles. The formation of my female subjectivity was, for the most part, a very passive, or at least, subconscious process in my adolescent years. As an adolescent girl, I was certainly aware of aspects and events in my life that highlighted gender roles; however, I was not encouraged to think critically about how they were shaping my own identity. Through the dynamics of sites in my rural community, the family home, circles of friendship, romantic relationships, and experiences in school, I personalized a socially constructed notion of what it means to be female.

As I conducted this research almost twenty years later, with a new generation of rural adolescent girls, it became clear that they, too, were learning and creating their own gendered subjectivities from similar sites, while also redefining and constructing understandings through the now popular route of social media. However, none of these sites serves independently to contribute to girls' understandings of themselves as daughters, siblings, friends, girlfriends or students, and the girls' understandings of themselves and their worlds are not compartmentalized according to the various roles they play. As a result, research concerned with the forming subjectivities of young women (and men) should also avoid such a compartmentalized approach, as each social location in which individuals operate over-laps with and influences the others. Thus, as girls move through sites, spaces and time, and negotiate popular societal, gendered and place-based discourses, a complex web of personally internalized information from which to understand themselves and their lives is created. Their ability to navigate this web influences, at any given moment of retrospective or current understanding, in any given situation, their willingness to exercise agency, voice, and resistance, and their

beliefs about life's possibilities and limitations. In this context, it is imperative that their education provides them with tools to understand and analyze their situations.

The space of school should contribute to encouraging a critical consciousness for these young women, teaching them how to think rather than what to think. More than four decades ago, Freire (1970) criticized traditional practices in education where knowledge is treated as a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable (educators) upon those whose knowledge they consider lacking and inferior (students). I was given a current glimpse into the practices Freire critiqued decades ago during my second interview with Sarah as she recounted one of her teacher's comments that women should not get equal pay since they get maternity leave, comments that two other participants were privy to as well as members of this class. I asked her if any of the students challenged him on such comments, and the following is her disheartening and frustrating response: "We try to like explain it to him, but he's, you know, he's a teacher and we're the students so like, he kinda just laughs it off and he's like, 'Well no, no, I think this.' And because he's had experiences working a real job and he has a wife and kids, like, he knows better than us." Sarah delivered this last sentence in an overtly sarcastic manner indicating an awareness of the power dynamics and that, on some level, she knows her voice matters, while also expressing frustration with the lack of value her voice is given in this space. Young women need support if they are to learn how to think, how to analyze their situations and develop a critical consciousness that will allow them a better understanding of their world and their place within it. Schools should be a space for reflexivity and agency, and nurture a comfortable balance between a sound sense of self and a conscious collective responsibility.

As this chapter has already included my recommendations for future research, along with a suggestion for how educators might implement the work of activists and policy makers to improve the lives of rural young women, I return to one of the purposes of this research: privileging the voices of rural young women. Since young people are regularly marginalized within society and have little, if any voice in decisions that have direct impacts on their lives, empirical research with young people provides an opportunity to listen closely to what they are saying (Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998). Thus research can give young people a stage on which their voices can contribute to academic or public debates, by generating a more authentic construction of their lives.

As I closed each of my final interviews with the girls, I reminded them that much of what we had discussed during our time together would be written about, and read by others. I explained that the people reading their stories may come from different locations, both urban and rural, and from a variety of walks of life, from university professors, to their high school teachers, other school officials, and, perhaps, people who are not part of an education system at all. I then asked the following and final question: what do you want other people to know about you? I close this dissertation with Stella and Sarah's responses, as they powerfully express many of the pervasive issues that were significant in the lives of these rural girls, while also highlighting their struggles to navigate the ambivalent, rocky terrain of adolescence.

> **Stella**: Not all of us are skids. I know I said this during the focus group too. Not all of us are skids. And not all of us are sluts either. And it's cool to dance at [Spring Creek Dance Studio] too. I don't know if I wanna say this to cover like,

all girls in Spring Creek, cause I mean, a lot of people just stay here and kinda settle for, you know, mediocre jobs and things like that. They just kinda stay where they are, but I have really big goals and just cause I'm from a small town, I'm not gonna let that limit me at all with anything.

Sarah: I think when it comes to people in general in small towns, not everything you've heard about a small town is true. Like, not all the stereotypes are true. We're not just a bunch of hicks who live in the same area and are all related. Although there is some truth to some of those, we're so much more than that. And I think a lot of people should start realizing that. We're not just a place for you to come in the summer. We're more than that. And we're growing too, which is good. It's a slow process, but it's happening. And I think I just want people to be aware of that. As for being a girl growing up in a small town, before you think of the stereotypes you've been taught growing up, whether you're a boy or a girl, think about what you're about to say, and if it's negative, don't say it. Like, stop trying to stereotype to girls so much as to being a certain way, especially young girls. Like, pre-teen to teenage girls. Stop creating this little box that girls need to be in, need to be a certain way. And girls in small towns need to act this way and be this way with guys. Like, stop thinking that and try to kind of expand your thoughts and be more open towards that. And think about feminism. Like, try to apply that.

References

Adamson, N., Briskin, L., & McPhail, M. (1988). *Feminist organizing for change: The contemporary women's movement in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.

Allen, P. (1970). Free space: A perspective on the small group in women's liberation. New York: Times Change Press.

Ansell, N., & van Blerk, L. (2007). Doing and belonging: Toward a more-than-representational account of young migrant identities in Lesotho and Malawi. In R. Panelli, S. Punch, & E. Robson, (Eds.), *Global perspectives on rural childhood and youth: Young rural lives* (pp. 17–28). New York: Routledge.

Asselin, M. E. (2003). Insider research: Issues to consider when doing qualitative research in your own setting. *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development, 19,* 99-103.

Attwood, F. (2006). Sexed up: Theorizing the sexualization of culture. *Sexualities, 9*, 77-94.

Attwood, F. (2007). Sluts and riot grrrls: Female identity and sexual agency. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *16*, 233-247.

Baker, J. (2010). Great expectations and post-feminist accountability: Young women living up to the "successful girls" discourse. *Gender and Education, 22*, 1-15.

Bamberg, M. (2004). Form and functions of "slut bashing" in male identity constructions in 15-year-olds. *Human Development, 249*, 1–23.

Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Blake, R., & Nurse, A. (2003). The rural problematic: An introduction to the trajectories of rural life. In R. Blake & A. Nurse, (Eds.), *The trajectories of rural life: New perspectives on rural Canada* (pp. vii -xi). Regina: Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990a). *Sociology in question.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990b). *The logic of practice.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1997). The forms of capital. In A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder & P. Brown, et al. (Eds.), *Education: Culture, economy, society* (pp. 46–58). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2000) Making the economic habitus: Algerian workers revisited. *Ethnography, 1*, 17 - 41.

Bourdieu, P. (2002). Habitus. In J. Hillier & E. Rooksby (Eds.), *Habitus: A sense of place* (pp. 27–34). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Bourdieu, P., Chamboredon, J. C., & Passeron, J. C. (1991). *The craft of sociology: Epistemological preliminaries*. New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bridges, D. (2001). The ethics of outsider research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 35*, 371–386.

Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bryant, L., & Pini, B. (2011). *Gender and rurality.* London: Routledge.

Budge, K. (2006). Rural leaders, rural places: Problem, privilege, and possibility. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 21,* 1-10.

Butler, J. (1995). For a careful reading. In S. Benhabib, J. Butler, D. Cornell & N. Fraser, (Eds.), *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp. 127–143). New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1996). Imitation and gender insubordination. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall (Eds.) *Women, knowledge, and reality: Explorations in feminist philosophy* (2nd ed., pp. 371-387). New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1999). Performativity's social magic. In R. Shusterman (Ed.), *Bourdieu: A critical reader* (pp. 113–28). Oxford: Blackwell.

Cairns, K. (2014). Both here and elsewhere: Rural girls' contradictory visions of the future. *Gender and Education*, *26*, 477-489.

Carr, C.L. (1998). Tomboy resistance and conformity: Agency in social psychological gender theory. *Gender and Society*, *12*, 528–553.

Charmaz, K**.** (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 507-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cherland, M. (1994). *Private practices: Girls reading fiction and constructing identity.* London, UK: Taylor and Francis.

Cloke, P., Phillips, M., & Thrift, N. (1995). The new middle classes and the social constructs of rural living. In: T. Butler & M. Savage, (Eds.), *Social change and the middle classes* (pp. 220 – 238). London, UK: UCL Press.

Corbett, M.J. (2006). Educating the country out of the child and educating the child out of the country: An excursion in spectrology. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 52*, 289-301.

Corbett, M.J. (2007a)*. Learning to leave: The irony of schooling in a coastal community.* Halifax, NS: Fernwood.

Corbett, M.J. (2007b). Travels in space and place: Identity and rural schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education, 30*, 771-792.

Coulter, R. P. (1999). "Doing gender" in Canadian schools: An overview of the policy and practice mélange. In S. Erskine & M. Wilson (Eds.), *Gender issues in international education* (pp. 113-129). New York & London: Falmer.

Coulter, R. P. (2012). What about the girls? *Education Canada*, *52(3)*, 6-9.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cuervo, H. (2011). Young people in rural communities: Challenges and opportunities in constructing a future. In S. Beadle, R. Holdsworth, & J. Wyn (Eds.), *For we are young and...? Young people in a time of uncertainty* (pp. 126–141). Melbourne, AU: Melbourne University Press.

Cuervo, H. (2014). Critical reflections on youth and equality in the rural context. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*, 544-557.

Currie, D. H., & Kelly, D. M. (2006). "I'm going to crush you like a bug": Understanding girls' agency and empowerment. In Y. Jiwani, C. Steenbergen, & C. Mitchell (Eds.), *Girlhood: Redefining the limits* (pp. 155-172). Montreal, QC: Black Rose.

Currie, D. H., Kelly, D. M., & Pomerantz, S. (2007). "The power to squash people": Understanding girls' relational aggression. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *28*, 23-37.

Davies, B. (1990). Agency as a form of discursive practice: A classroom scene observed. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 11*, 341-361.

De Beauvoir, S. (1974). *The second sex: The classic manifesto of the liberated woman.* New York, NY: Vintage Books.

de Bold, E., Wilson, M., & Malave, I. (1994) *Mother-daughter revolution: From good girls to great women.* New York: Bantam Books.

DeWalt, K., & DeWalt, R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworker*s. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Dentith, A. (2008). Smart girls, hard-working girls but not yet self-assured girls: The limits of gender equity politics. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *31*, 145 - 166.

Denzin, N. K. (2009). The elephant in the living room: Or extending the conversation about the politics of evidence. *Qualitative Research*, *9*, 139-160.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, *40*, 314-321.

Di Maggio, P. (1979) Review essay on Pierre Bourdieu. *American Journal of Sociology, 84,* 1460 - 1474.

Dillabough, J. A. (2004). Class, culture and the "predicaments of masculine domination": Encountering Pierre Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *25*, 489-506.

Dixon, J., & Durrheim, K. (2004). Dislocating identity: Desegregation and the transformation of place. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 24*, 455–473.

Driscoll, C. (2002). *Girls: Feminine adolescence in popular culture and cultural theory.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Driscoll, C. (2005). Girl-doll: Barbie as puberty manual. In C. Mitchell & J. Reid-Walsh (Eds.), *Seven going on seventeen: Tween stories in the culture of girlhood* (pp. 224 – 241). New York: Peter Lang.

Dunkley, C., & Panelli, R. (2007). "Preppy-jocks", "rednecks", "stoners", and "scum": Power and youth social groups in rural Vermont. In R. Panelli, S. Punch & E. Robson (Eds.), *Global perspectives on rural childhood and youth: Young rural lives* (pp.165- 177). New York, NY: Routledge.

Du Plessis, V., Beshiri, R., Bollman, R. D., & Clemenson, H. (2002). *Definitions of "rural"* (Report No. 28031). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

Durham, M. G. (1999a). Articulating adolescent girls' resistance to patriarchal discourse in popular media. *Women's Studies in Communication, 22,* 210-229.

Durham, M. G. (1999b). Girls, media, and the negotiation of sexuality: A study of race, class, and gender in adolescent peer groups. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *76*, 193-216.

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *8*, 54-63.

Edelman, H. (1994). *Motherless daughters: The legacy of loss.* New York, NY: Delta.

Edgerton, J. D., & Roberts, L. W. (2014). Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality. *Theory and Research in Education*, *12,* 193-220.

Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V., & Maw, J. (Eds.) (1998). *Failing boys? Issues in gender and achievement.* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Farrugia, D. (2014). Towards a spatialised youth sociology: The rural and the urban in times of change. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*, 293-307.

Fay, B. (1996). *Contemporary philosophy of social science: A multicultural approach.* Cambridge, UK: Blackwell.

Finders, M. J. (1997). *Just girls: Hidden literacies and life in junior high*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Fine, M. (1988). Sexuality, schooling, and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire. *Harvard Educational Review, 58,* 29-53.

Fine, M., & McClelland, S. (2006). Sexuality education and desire: Still missing after all these years. *Harvard Educational Review, 76,* 297-338.

Firth, R., & Robinson, A. (2016). For a revival of feminist consciousness-raising: Horizontal transformation of epistemologies and transgression of neoliberal TimeSpace. *Gender and Education, 28,* 343 – 358.

Francis, B. & Skelton, C. (2005). *Reassessing gender and achievement: Questioning contemporary key debates*. London, UK: Routledge.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, C., Sullivan, A., & Taylor, J. (1995). *Beyond voice and silence: Women and girls, race and relationships.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, C. (2013). *Joining the resistance*. Cambridge, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New York, NY: Aldine.

Gonick, M. (2006). Between girl power and reviving Ophelia: Constituting the neo-liberal girl subject. *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, *18*, 1–23.

Gonick, M., Renold, E., Ringrose, J., & Weems, L. (2009). Rethinking agency and resistance: What comes after girl power? *Girlhood Studies, 2*, 1–9.

Goodhart, F. W., Hsu, J., Baek, J. H., Coleman, A. L., Maresca, F. M., & Miller, M. B. (2006). A view through a different lens: Photovoice as a tool for student advocacy. *Journal of American College Health*, *55*, 53-56.

Gordon, T. (2006). Girls in education: Citizenship, agency and emotions. *Gender and Education*, *18*, 1-15.

Green, F. J. (2006). Developing a feminist motherline: Reflections on a decade of feminist parenting. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, *8*, 7 - 20.

Griffin, C. (2004). Good girls, bad girls: Anglocentrism and diversity in the constitution of contemporary girlhood. In A. Harris (Ed.), *All about the girl: Culture, power, and identity* (pp. 29–44). New York, NY: Routledge.

Grover, S. (2003). Social research in the advancement of children's rights. *Journal of Academic Ethics, 1*, 119-130.

Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *10*, 261-280.

Guillemin, M., & Drew, S. (2010). Questions of process in participant-generated visual methodologies. *Visual Studies 25*, 175–188.

Hall, S., & Jefferson, E. (Eds.) (1976). *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain.* London, UK: Hutchinson.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hancock, E. (1989). *The girl within.* New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Harding, S. (2009). Standpoint theories: Productively controversial. *Hypatia*, *24*, 192-200.

Harris, A. (2004*). Introduction.* In A. Harris (Ed.), *All about the girl: Culture, power, and identity* (pp. xvi-xxv). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hartigan, J. (2003). Who are these white people?: "Rednecks," "hillbillies," and "white trash" as marked racial subjects. In A. Doane & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), *White out: The continuing significance of racism (*pp. 95 -111)*.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Haugen, M., & Villa, M., (2005). Rural idylls or boring places? In: B.B. Bock & S. Shortall (Eds.), *Rural gender relations: Issues and case studies* (pp. 181 - 195). Wallingford, Oxfordshire, UK: CABI.

Hayes, D. (2004). Fear of (and fascination with) a black planet: The relocation of rap by white non-urban youth. *Topia*, *12*, 63-82.

Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2007). *Feminist research practice: A primer.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hilgers, M., & Mangez, É. (Eds.). (2014). *Bourdieu's theory of social fields: Concepts and applications*. London, UK: Routledge.

Holloway, S., & Valentine, G. (2000). Children's geographies and the new social studies of childhood. In S. Holloway & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Children's geographies: Playing, living, learning* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hornosty, J., & Doherty, D. (2003). Responding to wife abuse in farm and rural communities: Searching for solutions that work. In R. Blake & A. Nurse (Eds.), *The trajectories of rural life: New perspectives on rural Canada* (pp. 37-54). Regina, SK: Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy.

Howley, C.B., Howley, A., & Yahn, J. (2014). Motives for dissertation research at the intersection between rural education and curriculum and instruction. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 29*, 1-12.

Iglesias, E., & Cormier, S. (2002). The transformation of girls to women: Finding voice and developing strategies for liberation. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *30*, 259-271.

Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *Qualitative Report, 17,* 6.

Jiwani, Y., Steenbergen, C., & Mitchell, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Girlhood: Redefining the limits*. Montreal, QC: Black Rose.

Jones, A. (1997). Teaching post-structuralist feminist theory in education: Student resistances. *Gender and Education*, *9*, 261-269.

Jones, J. (2005). An ecology of emotion, memory, self and landscape. In J. Davidson, L. Bondi, & M. Smith, (Eds.), *Emotional geographies* (pp. 205–218). Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate.

Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work, 45,* 439-447.

Keddie, A. (2005). On fighting and football: Gender justice and theories of identity construction. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies In Education, 18*, 425–444.

Kenway, J., & McLeod, J. (2004). Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and "spaces of points of View": Whose reflexivity, which perspective? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *25*, 525-544.

Kenway, J., Willis, S., Blackmore, J., & Rennie, L. (1994). Making "hope practical" rather than "despair convincing": Feminist post-structuralism, gender reform and educational change. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *15*, 187-210.

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: Introducing focus groups. *BMJ*, *311*, 299-302.

Krueger, R., & Casey, M. (2009). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (4th ed.). London, UK: Sage.

Leyshon, M. (2008). The betweeness of being a rural youth: Inclusive and exclusive lifestyles. *Social and Cultural Geography, 9,* 1–26.

Leyshon, M., & Bull, J. (2011). The bricolage of the here: Young people's narratives of identity in the countryside. *Social & Cultural Geography, 12*, 159–180.

Lincoln,Y. S. (2002, November). *On the nature of qualitative evidence.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Sacramento, CA.

MacDonald, F. (2014). Negotiations of identity and belonging: Beyond the ordinary obviousness of tween girls' everyday practices. *Girlhood Studies*, *7*, 44-60.

Madison, D. S. (2011). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Malatest, R.A. & Associates. (2002). *Rural youth migration: Exploring the reality behind the myths* (Report No. 2146/E). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

Manzo, L. C. (2003). Beyond house and haven: Toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 23,* 47–61.

Martin, K. (1998). Becoming a gendered body. *American Sociological Review, 63*, 494–511.

Martin, C., & Valenti, V. (2013). #FemFuture: Online revolution. *Barnard Center for Research on Women*, *8.* Retrieved from http://bcrw.barnard.edu/wp-content/nfs/reports/NFS8-FemFuture-Online-Revolution-Report-April-15-2013.pdf

Martino, W., & Rezai-Rashti, G. (2012). "Failing boys" and the question of what counts as evidence: Investigating equity and neoliberal reform agendas. In C.J. Greig & W. Martino (Eds.), *Canadian men and masculinities: Historical and contemporary perspectives* (pp. 159-175). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Massey, D. (1995). Making spaces, or, geography is political too. *Soundings, 1,*193-208.

Maton, K. (2008). Habitus. In Michael Grenfell (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts* (pp. 49-65). Stocksfield, Northumberland, UK: Acumen.

201

Matthews, H., & Tucker, F. (2007). On both sides of the tracks: British rural teenagers' views on their ruralities. In R. Panelli, S. Punch, & E. Robson, (Eds.). *Global perspectives on rural childhood and youth: Young rural lives* (pp. 95-106). New York, NY: Routledge.

McGranahan, D. A. (2003). How people make a living in rural America. In D. L. Brown & L. E. Swanson (Eds.), *Challenges for rural America in the twenty-first century* (pp. 135-151). University Park, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press.

McLeod, J. (2005). Feminists re-reading Bourdieu: Old debates and new questions about gender habitus and gender change. *Theory and Research in Education*, *3*, 11-30.

McNay, L. (1999). Gender, habitus and the field: Pierre Bourdieu and the limits of reflexivity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *16*, 95-117.

McRobbie, A. (1978). The culture of working class girls. In A. McRobbie (Ed.), *Feminism and youth culture* (pp. 44 – 66). New York, NY: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. (2008a). *The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change.* London, UK: Sage.

McRobbie, A. (2008b). Young women and consumer culture. *Cultural Studies, 22,* 531-550.

McRobbie, A., & Garber, J. (2000). Girls and subcultures. In A. McRobbie (Ed.), *Feminism and youth culture* (2nd ed., pp. 12 - 25). New York, NY: Routledge.

Miller, M. (2008). *Branding Miss G: Third wave feminists and the media*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Mills, C. W. (1959). The sociological imagination. New York, NY : Oxford University
 Press.

Mills, J. (1991). *Womanwords: A vocabulary of culture and patriarchal society*. London,
 UK: Virago.

Montell, F. (1999). Focus group interviews: A new feminist method. *NWSA Journal*, *11,*
 44-71.

Morgan, B.L. (1998). A three generational study of tomboy behaviour. *Sex Roles*, *39*,
 787 – 800.

Morris, E. (2008). "Rednecks," "rutters," and "'rithmetic": Social class, masculinity, and
 schooling in a rural context. *Gender and Society, 22*, 728-51.

Morrow, V., & Richards, M. (1996). The ethics of social research with children: An
 overview. *Children and Society*, *10*(2), 90-105.

Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2008). Verification
 strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research.
 International Journal of Qualitative Methods, *1*, 13-22.

Nairn, K., Panelli, R., & McCormack, J. (2003). Destabilizing dualisms: Young people's
 experiences of rural and urban environments. *Childhood, 10,* 9–42.

Naples, N. A. (1996). A feminist revisiting of the insider/outsider debate: The "outsider
 phenomenon" in rural Iowa. *Qualitative Sociology, 19,* 83 – 106.

Naples, N. A. (2000). Standpoint epistemology and the use of self-reflection in feminist
 ethnography: Lessons for rural sociology. *Rural Sociology, 65*, 194-214.

Ono, K. (2000). To be vampire on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer:* Race and ("other") socially marginalizing positions on horror TV. In E.R. Helford (Ed.), *Fantasy girls: Gender in the new universe of science fiction and fantasy television* (pp. 163–186). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009). *Me read? And how! Ontario teachers report on how to improve boys' literacy skills.* Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.

O'Reilly, A. (1998). Mothers, daughters, and feminism today: Empowerment, agency, narrative, and motherline. *Canadian Woman Studies*, *18*, 16 - 21.

Orenstein, P. & AAUW. (1994). *Schoolgirls: Young women, self-esteem, and the confidence gap.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Packard, J. (2008). "I'm gonna show you what it's really like out here": The power and limitation of participatory visual methods." *Visual Studies, 23*, 63–77.

Paechter, C. (2010). Tomboys and girl-girls: Embodied femininities in primary schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 31*, 221–235.

Panelli, R., Punch, S., & Robson, E. (2007). *Global perspectives on rural childhood and youth: Young rural lives.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Peirce, B. N. (1995). The theory of methodology in qualitative research. *TESOL*, *29*, 569-576.

Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls.* New York, NY: Ballentine.

Pini, B., Mayes, R., & McDonald, P. (2010). The emotional geography of a mine closure: A study of the Ravensthorpe Nickel Mine in Western Australia. *Social and Cultural Geography, 11,* 559–574.

Pini, B., Moletsane, R., & Mills, M. (2014). Education and the global rural: Feminist perspectives. *Gender and Education*, *26*, 453-464.

Pole, C., & Morrison, M. (2003). *Ethnography for education.* Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.

Pomerantz, S. (2008). *Girls, style, and school identities: Dressing the part.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Pomerantz, S. (2009). Between a rock and a hard place: Un/defining the "girl". *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures, 1,* 147 – 158.

Pomerantz, S., & Raby, R. (2011). "Oh, she's so smart": Girls' complex engagements with post/feminist narratives of academic success. *Gender and Education*, *23*, 549-564.

Pomerantz, S., Raby, R., & Stefanik, A. (2013). Girls run the world? Caught between sexism and postfeminism in school. *Gender and Society*, *27*, 185-207.

Power, N. G., Norman, M. E., & Dupré, K. (2014). Rural youth and emotional geographies: How photovoice and words-alone methods tell different stories of place. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*, 1-16.

Prince, D. (2014). What about place? Considering the role of physical environment on youth imagining of future possible selves. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*, 697-716.

Prohansky, H. M. (1978). The city and self-identity. *Environment and Behavior,10.* 147–169.

Raby, R. (2005). What is resistance? *Journal of Youth Studies, 8,* 151 – 171.

Raby, R. (2010). "Tank tops are ok but I don't want to see her thong": Girls' engagements with secondary school dress codes. *Youth and Society, 41*, 333-356.

Ramsey, D., Annis, B., & Everitt, J. (2003). Rural community in Westman: Theoretical and empirical considerations. In R. Blake & A. Nurse (Eds.), *The trajectories of rural life: New perspectives on rural Canada* (pp. 1-10). Regina: Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy.

Reay, D. (2001). "Spice Girls," "nice girls," "girlies," and "tomboys": Gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom. *Gender and Education*, *13*, 153-166.

Reay, D. (2004). "It's all becoming a habitus": Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *25*, 431–444.

Reay, D. (2005). Beyond consciousness? The psychic landscape of social class. *Sociology*, *39*, 911-928.

Renold, E. (2005). *Girls, boys and junior sexualities: Exploring children's gender and sexual relations in the primary school*. London, UK: Routledge.

Rentschler, C., & Mitchell, C. (2016). The significance of place in girlhood studies. In C. Mitchell & C. Rentschler (Eds.), *Girlhood and the politics of place (*pp. 1 – 15). New York, NY: Berghahn Books

Renold, E., & Allan, A. (2006). Bright and beautiful: High achieving girls, ambivalent femininities, and the feminization of success in the primary school. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *27*, 457-473.

Richardson, L. (1992). Trash on the corner: Ethics and technography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *21*, 103-119.

Ringrose, J. (2007). Successful girls? Complicating post-feminist, neoliberal discourses of educational achievement and gender equality. *Gender and Education*, *19*, 471-489.

Rutter, V. (1996). *Celebrating girls: Nurturing and empowering our daughters*. Berkeley, CA*:* Conari Press.

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field methods*, *15*, 85-109.

Rye, J. F. (2006). Rural youths' images of the rural. *Journal of Rural Studies, 22,* 409–421.

Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London, UK: Sage.

Schilt, K. (2003). "I'll resist with every inch and every breath": Girls and zine making as a form of resistance. *Youth & Society*, *35*, 71-97.

Scott, D., & Morrison, M. (2006). *Key ideas in educational research*. New York, NY: Continuum International.

Scourfield, J., Dicks, B., Holland, S., Drakeford, M., & Davies, A. (2006). The significance of place in middle childhood: Qualitative research from Wales. *British Journal of Sociology, 57,* 577-595.

Seaton, E. (2007). "If teachers are good to you": Caring for rural girls in the classroom. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 22*, 1-16.

Seidman, I. (2012). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sennett, R., & Cobb, J. (1972). *The hidden injuries of class.* New York, NY: Vintage.

Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of class & gender: Becoming respectable.* London, UK: Sage.

Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, D. E. (1997). Comment on Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited". *Signs, 22*, 392-398.

Smith, D. E. (2005). Institutional ethnography: A feminist method. *Resources for Feminist Research*, *15*, 6-13.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2000). Poststructural feminism in education: An overview. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *13*, 477-515.

Strack, R. W., Magill, C., & McDonagh, K. (2004). Engaging youth through photovoice. *Health Promotion Practice*, *5*, 49-58.

Tanenbaum, L. (2000). *Slut! Growing up female with a bad reputation*. New York, NY: Perennial.

Taylor, J. M., Gilligan, C., & Sullivan, A. (1995). *Between voice and silence: Women and girls, race and relationships.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

The Miss G Project. (2016, May 9). For equity in education. Retrieved from http://themissgproject.wix.com/index_new

Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2014). NetTweens: The Internet and body image concerns in pre-teenage girls. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, *34*, 606-620.

Valentine, G., Skelton, T., & Chambers, D. (1998). Cool places: An introduction to youth and youth cultures. In T. Skelton & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures* (pp. 1 – 32). New York, NY: Routledge.

Varpalotai, A. (1998). Gender and education in an agricultural community. *Canadian Woman Studies*, *17*(4), 127–130.

Varpalotai, A. (2005). "A web of support" for rural girls: A school/community healthcare partnership. *Canadian Woman Studies*, *24*(4), 153-159.

Wacquant, L. (1989). Towards a reflexive sociology: A workshop with Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociological Theory, 7,* 26 – 63.

Wang, C. C. (1999). Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. *Journal of Women's Health*, *8*, 185-192.

Watson, A. (2011). Not just a "boy problem": An exploration of the complexities surrounding literacy under-achievement. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 32,* 779-795.

Way, A. (2013). There's no "I" in team: Adolescent emotions as a space for organizing feminine identity. *Emotion, Space and Society, 7, 26-34.*

Webb, J., Schirato, T., & Danaher, G. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu.* Sydney, AU: Allen & Unwin.

Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory.* Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Weems, L. (2009). M.I.A in the global landscape: Rethinking girls' resistance and agency in postcolonial contexts. *Girlhood Studies, 2*, 55 – 75.

Weis, L. (2008). Toward a re-thinking of class as nested in race and gender: Tracking the white working class in the final quarter of the twentieth century. In L. Weis (Ed.), *The way class works: Readings on school, family and the economy* (pp. 291-304). New York, NY: Routledge.

White, E. (2002). *Fast girls: Teenage tribes and the myth of the slut.* New York, NY: Berkley.

Willett, R. (2008). "What you wear tells a lot about you": Girls dress up online. *Gender and Education*, *20*, 421-434.

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Zaslow, E. (2009). *Feminism, Inc.: Coming of age in girl power media culture.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

APPENDIX B: ETHICS FORM OF APPROVAL

Western Research

Research Ethics

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice
REVISED

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rebecca Coulter
Department & Institution: Education\Faculty of Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 106301
Study Title: Learning to be Women: A Study of Adolescent Girls in Rural Ontario

NMREB Initial Approval Date: March 03, 2015
NMREB Expiry Date: March 01, 2016

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received January 26, 2015	
Letter of Information & Consent	Received January 26, 2015	
Instruments	Data collection tasks. Received January 26, 2015	
Advertisement	Research advertisement. Received January 26, 2015	
Other	School board application. Received January 26, 2015	

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethic_____ or delegated board member

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile ___ Nicole Kaniki ___ Grace Kelly ✓ Katelyn Harris ___ Vikki Tran ___ Karen Gopaul ___

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INFORMATION & CONSENT

Project Title: Learning to be Women: A Study of Adolescent Girls in Rural Ontario

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rebecca Coulter   **PhD Student:** Laura Lockhart

Letter of Information

1. **Invitation to Participate**

   You are being invited to participate in this research study about girls'
   experiences with growing up rural because you are a young woman attending
   secondary school in the community of interest for this study.

2. **Purpose of the Letter**

   The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information required for you
   to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. **Purpose of this Study**

   The purpose of this study is to gain particular insights into the experiences and
   aspirations of adolescent girls in Ontario's near north. The objective of this
   research is to give voice to rural young women and generate new
   understandings about what it is like to grow up in rural Ontario by analyzing the
   thoughts, opinions, and experiences you share with me.

4. **Inclusion Criteria**

   Individuals who are female, full time students grades nine through twelve, are
   eligible to participate in this study.

5. **Exclusion Criteria**

   If you are male, or not a full-time student, you are not eligible to participate in
   this study.

6. **Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in four, hour-long, individual interviews with me, and four, hour-long, group discussions with me and three or four other participants. For one of the interviews you will be asked to complete an activity that requires taking photographs of places and/or spaces that are meaningful to you, making sure that other people are not included in the photos. In an individual interview you will discuss the importance of the places in these photographs with me. If you do not have access to a camera, I will provide you with one.

It is anticipated that the entire study will take place over five months, or one school semester. Both the individual interviews and group discussions will be digitally recorded (audio only) to allow me to transcribe our discussions. The interviews and group discussions will be conducted in the school, outside of class time.

7. **Possible Risks and Harms**

The information you share with me in our individual interviews will be kept strictly confidential. However, the information you share in our group discussions will be heard by all of the participants in that session. I cannot guarantee that the other participants will not share your information with members outside of our group. However, you and the other participants are asked to respect the confidentiality and privacy of those in the group by not repeating anything that is said in the group discussions to others outside of the group.

It is also important for you to know that if, during our discussions in any of the activities, you disclose incidents of physical or sexual abuse, I must adhere to my legal and professional duties to report such disclosures to the appropriate school or social welfare officials.

8. **Possible Benefits**

Participating in this study will give you an opportunity to think about your experiences and your future, and to make your voice heard. Information gathered may also provide benefits to society as a whole. These include providing insight into the experiences and aspirations of adolescent girls in

Ontario's near north, expanding knowledge of rural youth, informing educators about ways to understand and support young women, and providing guidance to policy makers with respect to enhancing life in rural areas.

9. Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

10. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status.

11. Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and be accessible only to my thesis supervisor and me. My research journal will be kept in a locked cabinet, along with the audio recordings of our discussions. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym, and it will be used on all transcripts of your individual and group interviews. If the results of this research are presented at conferences or published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed from my database and destroyed. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

12. Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Coulter at: xxx, or, Laura Lockhart at: xxx.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics at xxx.

13. Publication

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any published study results, please contact me at: xxx.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent Form

Project Title: Learning to be Women: A Study of Adolescent Girls in Rural Ontario

Principal Investigator's Name: Dr. Rebecca Coulter   **PhD Student:** Laura Lockhart

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Student Participant's Name (please print): _____

Student Participant's Signature: _____

Student Participant's Email Address: _____

Date: _____

- -

    ☐ I agree to have _____participate in the
    study.

    ☐ I do not agree to have _____ participate in the
    study.

Name of Parent / Legal Guardian/Legally Authorized Representative (please print):
_____

Signature of Parent / Legal Guardian/ Legally Authorized Representative:
_____

Date: _____

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print):_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Vitae

LAURA LOCKHART

Post-Secondary Education & Degrees:	University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2013 – 2016 Ph.D Candidate
	University of New England Portland, Maine, United States 2010 – 2012 M.S.Ed
	Nipissing University North Bay, Ontario, Canada 2002 – 2003 B.Ed
	Nipissing University North Bay, Ontario, Canada 1999 – 2002 B.A
Honours and Awards:	Students' Council Undergraduate Teaching Award University of Western Ontario 2016
Related Work Experience:	Instructor University of Western Ontario 2016
	Research Assistant The University of Western Ontario 2015
	ESL Mathematics Teacher 2014 – 2015
	Department Head, Mathematics 2008 – 2012
	Virtual Learning Teacher, Mathematics 2007 – 2009
	Teacher, Mathematics & English 2003 - Present

Scholarly Contributions:

Lockhart, L (2012). *Incorporating Literacy Into the Math Classroom*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of New England, Portland, ME.

Conference Presentations:

Lockhart, L. (2016). Light, Sound, Meaning: Rural Young Women Share Their Lives. Paper presented at the *International Girl Studies Association Inaugural Conference*, Norwich, East Anglia, United Kingdom. (April 7, 2016).

Lockhart, L. (2015). Why Rural Girls Matter. Paper presented at the *20th National Congress on Rural Education,* Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. (March 30, 2015).

Lockhart, L. (2014). Rural Adolescent Girls' Experiences with Schooling. Paper presented at the *Canadian Society for the Study of Education,* St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada. (May 28, 2014).