ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: "PUSHED OUT" AND PULLED IN: GIRLS OF COLOR,
THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND
NEOLIBERALISM'S DOUBLE-BIND

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This ethnography of court-involved girls in New York City argues that the last three
decades have been a period of accelerating transformation of the juvenile and
criminal justice systems, and of their encroachment into the lives of urban, low-
income girls of color. These processes are inextricably related to a broader set of
economic and cultural changes referred to as neoliberalism. Shifts in the material
conditions in these girls' communities, largely through the withdrawal of public
interest in favor of competition and efficiency, have been accompanied by an
ideological framework that instructs girls to be "independent," entrepreneurial, and
individually accountable. This discourse of "empowerment" masks important
unexamined assumptions imported from previous juridical, sociological, and
criminological constructions of girls as deviant: first, that the appropriate
epistemological foundations for the study of girls lie outside them; and second, that
girls are discrete variables—sites of pathology or victimization, but not of agency or
critical capacity. Rather than reduce these girls to a set of pathologies or present them
as individual actors making "bad choices," I ground my analysis in girls' narratives
and analytic frameworks, tracing the cultural and economic inflections of
neoliberalization in their family, community, and institutional lives. I explore the
physical and psychic violence being perpetrated against court-involved girls on a

daily basis. For these young women of color, the net result of neoliberalization in New York City is a series of double-binds: pairings of violent or threatening message and context that directly contradict one another, and where to acknowledge the disjunction itself provokes further, punitive violence. These double-binds underlie and perpetuate the system of penality and punishment. While a discursive legacy of individual pathology still colors the construction of these girls in the cultural dreamwork, I argue that it is the system itself that has become pathological, contributing in essential ways to the production of girls as delinquent and deviant. This dissertation explores this production, alongside girls' methods of coping, resisting, and sometimes perpetuating, neoliberal narratives. It concludes with recommendations arising from the dramatic re-envisioning of urban girls of color as civic actors and central members of our communities.

"PUSHED OUT" AND PULLED IN: GIRLS OF COLOR, THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND NEOLIBERALISM'S DOUBLE-BIND

by

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Preface

Rather than directing itself at a specific audience, this dissertation is intentionally positioned to make a number of sealed-off conversations—those taking place amongst activist-scholars and prison abolitionists, academics illuminating the nuanced experiences of girls and women of color, and criminal justice practitioners—audible to each other. I have spent the last seven years working alongside impassioned people who, personally and professionally, see the need to intervene in the expansion of the prison-industrial complex. However, it is easy for those of us who "work within the system"—that is, in partnership with the police, prosecutors and the defense bar, the judiciary, and the court system—to become blind to the criminal justice system's porous boundaries and the full extent of its tentacular sprawl into very specific kinds of communities. Academic and theoretical work is instructive here, teasing out the intersections of the logic, rhetoric, and economics facilitating this sprawl. Most important, and also most difficult for practitioners to access, are the narratives and analyses of those on whom the justice system acts. My hope is that this study will make their realities more concrete, and in so doing bring to light some of the valuable knowledge of those who are "working within the system" in a very different sense—those it acts upon, and those working to dismantle it.

Dedication

To my steadfast partner in all things, Garth Risk Hallberg.
Resurgam.

Acknowledgements

When I arrived at the University of Maryland in my early 20s, full of passion and a desire to change the world, I encountered an intellectual community that pushed me to expand my notions of social justice, of scholarship, and of myself. I was lucky to work with excellent faculty, including the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. A. Lynn Bolles, Dr. John L. Caughey, Dr. Christina Hanhardt, and Dr. Sheri Parks. When I moved from College Park to New York City, shortly after completing coursework, meetings during office hours turned into long phone calls or impassioned discussions over coffee. I am grateful to them all for their wisdom and kindness. The bedrock of my entire graduate experience, however, has been my program and dissertation advisor, Dr. Mary Corbin Sies. She has shepherded me along difficult and uncertain paths with rigorous intellect and generosity, and has helped make this project what it has become.

During the time I researched and wrote this dissertation, my family changed its make-up numerous times, in ways positive and negative, but always profound. My husband, Garth Risk Hallberg, rallied his formidable talents in support of my work serving as a sounding board, reader, editor, time-management consultant, and child-care provider. My little sons, Amos and Walt, provided me with hours of amusement and diversion. My parents, step-parents, siblings, and extended family have all offered their love and encouragement, without which this project would never have been completed.

The dedicated STARS program staff and administration consistently supported this project, taking time out of their busy days to explain the program and their role within it, to share their insights and observations, and to help arrange times and spaces for me to meet with program participants. I thank them all.

Finally, for the many hours they spent with me, I am indebted to the young women whose stories I tell in the pages that follow. I wish I could recognize them by name, but of course cannot. Heartbreaking, beautiful, and fierce, these girls are perhaps my greatest teachers. I thank them for risking connection with me, and for showing us all what resilience truly looks like.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One
Introduction

Shifts in theoretical and ideological approaches to prison and punishment often accompany moments of economic crisis. Surpluses of all varieties—be they of capital, of land, or of certain kinds of people—are inevitably resolved in some way, and as Ruth Wilson Gilmore has demonstrated, in the last fifty years this has often been through the "prison-industrial complex."[1] Likewise, deficits are often leveraged in prison policy debates, even if only rhetorically, by both ends of the left-right political spectrum. The period of stagnation and recession running from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, for instance, ushered in an era of criminal justice practice that on one hand cut services and "rehabilitative" programming (e.g. GED and college education initiatives, job readiness and trade education initiatives, etc.), while on the other, exponentially increasing the number of people celled. The recession

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[1] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). 26-27. Angela Davis provided the original framing of what is now a sizable body of literature on the "prison-industrial complex," highlighting the business-government economic relationship that incentivized mass incarceration and drawing a parallel to what President Dwight D. Eisenhower referred to as the "military-industrial complex." Angela Davis, "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex," *ColorLines*, September 10 1998. Mike Davis, in the other canonical framing of this concept, used it to refer to the apparatus—both physical and economic—that supports the construction and continuance of prisons and a "permanent prison class." Mike Davis, "Hell Factories in the Field: A Prison Industrial Complex," *The Nation*, February 20 1995. Other foundational texts include Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003)., Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Globalization and US Prison Growth: From Military Keynesianism to Post-Keynesian Militarism," *Race & Class* 40, no. 2/3 (1998/9).

that began in 2007 and accelerated with the collapse of global investment bank

Lehman Brothers generated another moment of economic crisis, creating a climate in

which a cost-benefit argument for systemic restructuring galvanized another round of

national juvenile and criminal justice reforms. New York City activists and

advocates, recognizing the technocratic priorities of the city's elected officials,

embarked on a campaign to leverage the state's need to cut costs. They argued for a

"realignment" of expenditures and control from the state level to the county level,

believing that municipalities were best positioned to understand and meet the needs of

the young people arrested within them. This would amount to a cost savings for the

state and New York City, which was required to cover 50% of the (high) cost of

every child warehoused in state-run placement "facilities."[2] On the detention side,

New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo's FY 2011-2012 budget incentivized

treating young people directly in their communities by increasing the typical

detention reimbursement from the state to the county from 49% (the rate for detention

reimbursement) to 62% (the new rate for alternative programming).[3]

 For a city facing budget deficits in the millions, such savings were obviously

appealing, as was the prospect of a new stream of funds from the state to subsidize

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[2] The Vera Institute of Justice, "Charting a New Course: A Blueprint for Transforming Juvenile Justice in New York State," (New York, NY2009)., 43. For more on this, as well as reform strategies employed by other states, see Douglas N. Evans, "Pioneers of Youth Justice Reform: Achieving System Change Using Resolution, Reinvestment, and Realignment Strategies," (New York: Research and Evaluation Center, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, 2012). Ruth Wilson Gilmore discusses "realignment" as a national strategy in Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Review of Cities and Race: America's New Black Ghetto," *Journal of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 1 (2008).
[3] Gabrielle Horowitz-Prisco, "The State of Youth Justice: 2012 in Review, A Deeper Dive," (New York: The Correctional Association of New York, 2013). 1.

juvenile incarceration locally. Behind the scenes, advocates for juvenile-justice reform voiced concerns that none of this net gain would be reinvested in communities, and that what was initially intended to be a realignment of funding would simply become massive budget cuts, leaving communities with even fewer resources. Ultimately, however, they opted to capitalize on a moment when state priorities could conceivably further their policy goals. [4]

Time will tell whether this gamble paid off. However, the speed with which reforms have since been implemented, and the unexpected and almost unprecedented accord reached by city and state politicians, necessitates a more critical exploration of the reforms, their underlying logic, and the implications for young people—in particular urban girls of color, who are often overlooked in discussions of youth justice reform. Rather than surmising that policy-makers had a collective epiphany that extended contact with the criminal justice system was harming young people, I suggest that the eagerness of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and city agency heads to back reform efforts was instead rooted in the same logic that had underwritten the criminalization of young people of color and the production of young women of color, specifically, as delinquent and deviant. [5] That is, precisely the logic that had created a system in need of reform in the first place.

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[4] On the advocacy side, this push was spearheaded by three primary advocacy groups: the Correctional Association of New York, the Children's Defense Fund, and Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions, Inc.

[5] Many problems arise from collapsing multiple racial and ethnic identities into the single designation "of color" as well as "Latino." At times, I attempt to highlight the differing social and historical legacies experienced by the specifically Black, Dominican, Mexican, and Puerto Rican young women who participated in this study. At other times, however, I side with Martin F. Manalansan IV, who argues that the designation "of color" provides a "provisional and strategic mode of understanding"

This logic rests on two unexamined assumptions: first, that the appropriate epistemological foundations for the study and administration of youth lie somewhere outside these youth; and second, that young people are discrete variables—sites of pathology, but not of agency or critical capacity. Moreover, this logic bleeds outward into family and community life. Young people of color, particularly those whose physical presentation suggests their involvement with what my informants and their friends call "the street," are increasingly understood by parents, neighbors, and the institutions they encounter as bad and dangerous kids in need of outside help to get them "back on track." Consequently, the larger discursive field that has come to surround court-involved young people has the strange effect of both singling them out and dissolving them. That is, they become at once delimited bodies in need of discipline and faceless statistics in a mass.

Much of the scholarly literature in criminology and sociology, for the last century, has treated them as such.[6] Researchers rely on large-scale surveys, control groups, and other quasi-scientific methods to draw conclusions about why young people do what they do and how their anti-social behavior can be eradicated. The political climate animating current reform efforts within the youth justice world, with its emphasis on "deliverables" and "evidence-based practices," is, from one angle, the

certain commonalities of experience while also recognizing numerous forms of difference. Martin F. Manalansan, IV, "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City," *Social Text* 3(2005). 154.
[6] For an excellent history of the racialization of criminality in the U.S., see Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2010).

newest outgrowth of this positivist approach to scholarship.[7] Large-scale studies,

with research questions devised by "experts in the field" solely in conversation with

other "experts," overlook the situated nature of court-involved girls' lived

experiences (not to speak of the insurgent knowledge they possess and create).[8]

Concern over whether this or that intervention helps "at-risk youth" avoid

"recidivating" assumes that these young people are living in a vacuum, where their

futures both are and are not their own to shape – in all the wrong ways.

Project History

During the period during which I designed and researched this project I was working

full time for a few different New York City non-profit agencies, first coordinating

several violence and crime prevention programs and then directly designing and

running a youth organizing program. Under the aegis of the first agency I gained

access to a number of facilities normally inaccessible to (or at least largely

unaccessed by) the general public. I encountered several thousand New York City

young people—largely students of color—in public and private middle and high

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[7] In New York State, youth 15 and under at the time of arrest go through the Family Court—the city's juvenile justice system—while those 16 and above go through Criminal Court—the city's criminal justice system. Each has its own legal procedures, history, and nomenclature. When I use either term in the pages that follow, I am referring to the specific systems. When I use the term "youth justice," I am referencing court-involved youth more broadly.

[8] Joy James defines "insurgent knowledge" as "the black or brown experiences of segregation, detention, surveillance and policing in a white-dominated state and society, and the radical experiences of resistance in overt and controversial manners recognized as political rebellion (and commonly condemned and criminalized as social deviance)." Joy James, ed. *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). 19. Here, I'm interested in thinking through how insurgent knowledge looks when it *isn't* explicitly politically rebellious.

schools, detention facilities, prisons, psychiatric facilities, public housing facilities, and community centers, sometimes facilitating discussions directly and sometimes observing conversations facilitated by others. I began to notice that the ways these young people talked about their own experiences of violence and crime were very different from the ways teachers, school and facility staff, administrators did. I realized that, with all the attention teenagers' "violent" behavior was getting, little of that attention involved engaging *with* them in ways that acknowledged their lived experience. This dissertation grows out of my desire to understand this strange schism on the one hand and, on the other, the peculiar atomization of court-involved girls. It asks six basic questions: How do New York City girls of color understand their contact with the criminal justice system? How do girls of color make sense of the state and social forces that act on and against them? What have their experiences of public institutions been? What have their friends, parents, and communities' experiences been? To what extent do these experiences and self-perceptions affect their understandings of their own agency? How are these experiences reflected in and informed by their built environments?

My efforts to answer these questions required first that I locate a group of court-involved young women with whom I might talk. I initially approached the New York City's Department of Juvenile Justice, which quickly informed me that interviews, or indeed academic work of any kind, with detained youth was impossible.[9] I realized that my best chance of engaging court-involved young women

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[9] The inability of third parties to enter, observe, or record the realities of detention and placement/incarceration is one of the central components of what Angela Davis has referred to as prisons' work to "disappear" detainees and inmates. For more on

would likely be through alternative-to-incarceration programs (ATIs), particularly

gender-specific ATIs. After reaching out to several programs in the New York

metropolitan area, I soon found one—the STARS program, an ATI for girls with

cases in Family and Criminal Court—that was interested in collaboration.[10] The

senior staff at this program believed strongly in the need for gender-specific

programming and wanted to understand more about the affect their services had on

the young women mandated to participate in it.[11] After about six months of emails

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this process, its historical roots, and its implications, see Davis, "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex." N.B.: In 2010, as part of the reforms mentioned, the Department of Juvenile Justice has been folded into the city's child welfare agency, the Administration for Children's Services. Explained the Mayor: "By bringing the Department of Juvenile Justice under the umbrella of ACS, the City is taking bold action to bolster public safety; make smarter, more limited use of detention; expand and enrich alternatives to incarceration; and improve long-term outcomes for all youth under the City's care." The Administration for Children's Services, "Mayor Bloomberg Signs Legislation Merging the Department of Juvenile Justice into the Administration for Children's Services," http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/pr_archives/pr10_12_07.shtml.

[10] The STARS program name, like the names of all participants in this study, is a pseudonym.

[11] The STARS program was designed in 2001 and launched in 2002, part of a growing national interest in "gender-specific" programming for court-involved girls. Gender-specific programming more broadly was conceptualized as a way to respond to the growing juvenile- and criminal-justice system involvement of girls and women. Out of many panels, task forces, and working groups that were convened during this period emerged a general consensus that girls' increased presence in the system was due to: social and systemic shifts in law-enforcement's perceptions of intra-familial conflict; bias in the processing of girls' cases; and a misunderstanding of girls' "pathways to delinquency." See, for example, Stephanie E. Covington and Barbara E. Bloom, "Gender-Responsive Treatment and Services in Correctional Settings," *Women & Therapy* 29, no. 3-4 (2006). American Bar Association and the National Bar Association, "Justice by Gender: The Lack of Appropriate Prevention, Diversion, and Treatment Alternatives for Girls in the Justice System," (2001). This approach has since been widely critiqued for eliding race and cultural issues, and for facilitating the increased policing and surveillance of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender girls and women. See, for instance, Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012)., Beth E. Richie, "Queering Antiprison Work: African American Lesbians in the Juvenile

and meetings, contracts were signed and I was given the go-ahead to begin. In the pages that follow, I provide little of the close detail of the program typical in ethnographies, (e.g. descriptions of the program location, its physical plant, smells, etc.). This omission is intentional, if unfortunate; there are very few entities, whether governmental or private, providing alternative-to-incarceration programming in New York City. Such additional information would make the program easily identifiably to system insiders, undermining my responsibility to protect the identity of the program and, most importantly, the girls themselves.

The STARS program was designed for girls between the ages of 13 and 21 who have cases in Family or Criminal Court. To enroll, girls were required to enter a guilty plea in court. They were mandated to participate in the STARS program for a period of either nine months (Family Court) or six months (Criminal Court). If they were Family Court respondents, upon successful completion of the program they received a conditional discharge. If they were criminal court defendants, they were given "Youthful Offender Status," or "YO" as it is commonly called. This essentially meant that records of offenses were sealed and (theoretically) invisible during background checks by employers or institutions of higher learning, and that girls would not have to report having been convicted of a crime. Girls were then put on probation and monitored for five years. If they failed to abide by the terms set forth by the Department of Probation, they faced being resentenced, this time to prison.

Over a year-and-a-half, from February 2008 through August 2009, I

Justice System," in *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex*, ed. Julia Sudbury (New York: Routledge, 2005). And Kimberlé Crenshaw, "From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally About Women, Race, and Social Control," *UCLA Law Review* 59(2012).

conducted nearly 140 hours of research, including observing more than 100 hours of programming. Through the lens of statistics, the 45 girls who enrolled in the program during this time looked like this: 58% were Black, 29% were Latina, and 13% self-identified as another race/ethnicity or as of mixed race/ethnicity. Girls' average age at intake was 17.5. Sixty-seven percent were living with a parent or parents; 13% were living with a grandparent; nine percent were living with another relative; and the remaining 11% had other living arrangements (only one of these reported living in foster care at intake). Ninety-one percent did not have a high school diploma or GED at intake and the same percentage was unemployed. During that period only two girls were referred from Family Court; STARS did not have historical records of their charges. The remaining girls (43 of the 45) were referred by Supreme Court, on felony charges. Only nine percent of these were drug related offenses, with the majority of charges being robbery, burglary, and assault. Eleven of the participants were referred from Bronx County Supreme Court, 18 from Kings County Supreme Court (Brooklyn), 15 from New York County Supreme Court (Manhattan), and one from Queens County Supreme Court. Seventy-three percent of the participants successfully completed their obligations to the Court, either by completing six or nine months of services at STARS (28 participants) or after being placed by STARS in a residential program for substance use (five participants). Of the 45 participants, 10 were arrested while in the program, and only two of those arrests resulted in actual convictions—one in time served and one in a conditional discharge. Both of those young women completed the program.[12]

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[12] Data provided by STARS' Director of Strategic Planning and Analysis in personal

These demographics tell us little about the actual lives of the young women, however. Taking as its project the (re)presentation of their experiences and voices, this dissertation is intentionally part of a legacy of poststructuralist and activist scholarship. The interdisciplinarity of American Studies makes it an ideal home for such a project. Rather than large-scale quantitative methods, I drew on a legacy of feminist research methodology, including ethnography—semi-structured and open-ended interviews and observation—and cultural-landscapes and participatory-action research. This collection of tools is necessary to understand my informants *in situ*— and to correct decades of misinformation, invisibility, and erasure. (It hardly needs saying that these are tools not often employed within the criminal justice system.) The result is an ethnography of court-involved young women of color ages 16-20 mandated to STARS.

During my year-and-a-half working with STARS participants, in addition to the 100 hours of program observation, I also conducted 21 hour-long individual interviews with five girls, ranging from two to seven sessions with each, and eight hour-long group interviews. The groups consisted of various permutations of nine participants (including three of the five girls who participated in individual interviews).[13] I recruited participants at two separate points during the year-and-a-half I worked with the program. The nine participants of these individual and group interviews self-selected, and looked demographically similar to the larger cohort of

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communication, 27 June, 2012.

[13] One of the primary challenges of designing and running court-related programming is the constant movement of participants in and out of programming. As I discuss later, during the course of my research, participants graduated, dropped out of the STARS program, were sent to drug treatment programs, or (in a few instances) were resentenced to prison.

program participants. Fifty-six percent self-identified as Latina, 33% self-identified as Black, and 11% self-identified as being of mixed race. The average age was 17.5. Notably, 33% identified as lesbian and 22% as bisexual, making LGBTQ girls the majority of participants in my study. The three lesbian girls also identified as "aggressive girls" or "AGs," that is, as having adopted a more traditionally masculine gender presentation (I discuss this term and its contours further in Chapter Three).[14]

Individual and group interviews were a combination of open-ended and semi-structured. During the first group session, I asked the young women to generate a list of topics they felt were of paramount importance to girls growing up in New York City. I charted their responses on butcher paper and, as a group, the girls discussed and debated until they had settled on a list of those they considered the most important. Their list determined the number of times the group met, the topics we'd discuss, and the order in which we did so. The groups focused on abuse, police, school, gender and relationships, neighborhoods, criminal justice system-involvement, and STARS. In each of these group interviews and the individual interviews, I came in with the general topic and questions to generate discussion, but did not attempt to determine the destination of the conversation. In addition to conducting group and individual interviews, and program observation, I engaged girls in community mapping and material-culture analysis projects that involved them as co-researchers. Material culture and cultural landscapes analyses are not methods

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[14] While I do not have the data to either support or disprove this theory, those girls identifying as AG unanimously believed that their violations of gender norms brought them into increased contact, and more punitive contact, with the police. They believed they were often targeted because of their AG presentation.

typically employed in even academic studies of court-involved youth.[15] However,

scholars who employ these methods have long argued that investigations of place

capture essential snapshots of the discourses and organic forms of knowledge that

people generate in and through their daily lives. In addition, I conducted individual

interviews with program staff, including the program's coordinator, art therapist, drug

counselor, and education coordinator.

I recorded all individual and group interviews using a digital recorder, with

the exception of my individual interviews with Natalia. Her father expressed concern

over having our conversations recorded, and so I took notes during sessions instead. I

transcribed verbatim all recorded interviews. After each visit to the STARS program

space, I noted my experiences, observations, the context surrounding recorded

individual and group interviews, and my memory of more casual conversations that

were not recorded. These I typed up as well. Once I had a complete set of typed

material, I proceeded with analysis, drawing on the "grounded theory" approach.[16] I

conducted a "close read" of all the material, applying a process of "open coding" of

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[15] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Mike Davis, and others have integrated geography, particularly as regards the California prison system, into research that examines the impact of prisons on local economies. See particularly Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography," *The Professional Geographer* 54, no. 1 (2002); Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California.* To my knowledge, however, there are no studies within the girlhood studies, critical youth, or prison studies literatures—the academic fields where such work would likely be housed—that examine the cultural landscapes or material cultures of urban young people of color.
[16] I draw on methods based on the work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. See Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic FIeldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Mike Crang and Ian Cook, *Doing Ethnographies* (London: Sage Publications, 2007); Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

girls' ideas, themes, actions, beliefs, etc., as I read line by line. As I coded, I kept a

separate set of notes (or "memos") where I tracked emerging theories for what I was

seeing. I repeated this process several additional times—coding and recoding—as I

began to identify the dominant themes I explore in the chapters that follow. At that

point I transferred all the hand-written coding into a software program that facilitated

the sorting of material on the basis of these themes for further analysis. These

materials went through a continued process of coding, sub-coding, and memo-

writing. As I developed theories, I tested them against the existing data and relevant

literatures and, at different stages, with two of the girls themselves. My arguments

derive from this iterative, inductive analytic process.

Neoliberalism and the Criminalization of Youth

Central among the emergent themes was the serious and wide-spread disconnect

between the ways the STARS girls talked about themselves and the premises of the

institutions presuming to speak and act on their behalf. These girls and young women

occupy a unique location in U.S. culture, at the nexus of competing and colluding

institutional and social pressures. Yet the realities of their lives remain obscured by a

series of half-truths, accidental oversights, and misrepresentations in the media,

political discourse, and the public imagination. To begin with, young women in

general, and particularly low-income girls and young women of color, remain largely

invisible in the civic life of the nation.[17] When they do appear, in the popular

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[17] African-American and Latina girls' relative civic invisibility is, ironically and
dangerously, in inverse proportion to their visibility in the nation's cultural
dreamwork. Chapter Two explores this notion in further depth.

imaginary, it tends to be either on the nightly news—as crime victims or perpetrators, "welfare queens," "gang girls," or "delinquents," who are out of control and incapable of functioning in "healthy" ways—or in popular media as hyper-sexualized and eroticized. The lives and stories of incarcerated women are similarly obscured. Rather than as bodies to be disciplined or exploited, however, the incarcerated young women of color who participated in this study saw themselves as scrappy survivors, alternately enmeshed in and abandoned by family, community, and institutions, and forced to fend for themselves amidst very difficult circumstances.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that the construction of young women of color as delinquent and deviant, though nearly as old as the country itself, has found new and pernicious life as neoliberalism evolved into the dominant economic and social ideology in the U.S. It is, by this point, a matter of general consensus that neoliberalism has become the governing economic theory in the U.S.[18] Whereas Keynesian economics held the core belief that the state should focus on full employment and the welfare of its citizens, intervening as necessary in market processes to secure these goals, neoliberal theory shifts the focus to privatization and deregulation of industry, with economic growth posited as an end, however putative. The theory suggests that these (combined with market competition) streamline governmental functioning, increase efficiency and productivity, increase quality, and

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[18] When I talk about neoliberalism I will be drawing on the evolving and voluminous—if contested—academic body of literature that has emerged over the last fifteen years. A good overview of the concept's history and some of the debates surrounding it can be found in Catherine Kingfisher and Jeff Maskovsky, "Introduction: The Limits of Neoliberalism," *Critique of Anthropology* 28(2008).

reduce costs, directly through the price of goods and indirectly through reduction of the tax burden.

How and when did neoliberalism begin to supercede Keynesianism? Following the period of global "stagflation" in the 1970s, Keynesian policies were widely perceived as having failed.[19] In his definitive work on the subject, David Harvey suggests that it was precisely at this moment that neoliberalism emerged as a set of economic policies, whose real function was to restore class power after stocks and assets lost value in the 1970s and labor and social movements sought to advance socialism as an economic alternative to capitalism. That is, rather than being unintended side effects of the shift of economic policy, Harvey argues that "[r]edistributive effects and increasing social inequality have in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberalization as to be regarded as structural to the whole project."[20] The year 1979 was particularly noteworthy, as it saw major restructuring of economic policies and a distinct move away from Keynesianism. In the US, Keynesianism would finally be abandoned in favor of a policy "designed to quell inflation no matter what the consequences to employment."[21]

It is impossible to separate the economic theory from its attendant reorganization of the U.S. social and cultural landscape. Indeed, a new porousness in the border between the economic and ideological spheres is one of the hallmarks of neoliberalism. In Harvey's account, the consolidation of neoliberal power required the manufacturing of political and social consent. This shift occurred in the context

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[19] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005). 12.
[20] Ibid., 16.
[21] Ibid., 23.

of a rhetorical shift in focus from social welfare and the welfare of the citizenry to individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and "family values." Newly emergent think-tanks, capturing segments of the media, and the conversion of intellectuals to neoliberal ways of thinking rapidly gave way to an ideological climate that posited neoliberalism as the guarantor of freedom.

Central to this turn was an injection of the language of political economy generally, and of the market specifically, into political and cultural discourse. From Wall Street to *Wall Street,* and from Milton Freedman to Eric B and Rakim, the message was that:

> [i]ndividual success or failure [should be] interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing enough of one's own human capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property (such as class exclusions usually attributed to capitalism).[22]

This is ironic to say the least. Part and parcel of the *practice* of neoliberalism is that as the state withdraws from welfare provision and other arenas of social service provision (education, health care, etc.)—whether ceding control to private interests or ceasing service provision altogether—larger and larger percentages of the population become vulnerable to impoverishment. The results can be seen not just in the widespread effects of the economic crisis beginning in 2007, but also in the stagnation of wages and purchasing power among the middle and lower classes following the (relatively) more broadly shared prosperity of the era of Keynesian consensus. But the *culture* of neoliberalism insists that success and failure, always defined economically, is the burden of the individual.

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[22] Ibid., 66.

Many scholars identify New York City as the birthplace of neoliberalism. As Harvey argues, the management of New York City's bankruptcy in the 1970s pioneered the neoliberal response to fiscal shocks. In the 1960s, under the post-Bretton Woods regime, the solution to "urban unrest" had been thought to be provisions for the general welfare in the form of public employment and public assistance.[23] (Though, notably, culture did not reiterate this with a single voice.) During the early 1970s, as a national fiscal crunch took hold, President Nixon declared urban unrest "over" to justify major cuts in funding to the states. This was a direct contributor to New York City's having to declare technical bankruptcy, as investment banks refused to step in to cover the cuts via continued holdings of city notes and bonds. In the restructuring that followed, under the supervision of the financier-dominated Municipal Assistance Corporation, unions and public services were severely diminished in their power and efficacy. "City government," Harvey writes, "was more and more construed as entrepreneurial rather than a social democratic or even managerial entity."[24]

During the 1980s, as this ideological shift was growing in its power and influence, the city's working-class and minority communities were further weakened by, first, the crack cocaine epidemic and, second, the AIDS epidemic.[25] When Rudy Giuliani became mayor in the 1990s, he placed tourism and "cleaning up" the city's image at the center of his platform. His crime-reduction tactics, so popular among the city's upper-middle and upper-class residents and its increasingly upward-aspiring

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[23] Ibid. 45.
[24] Ibid. 47.
[25] Lisa Maher, *Sexed Work: Gender, Race, and Resistance in a Brooklyn Drug Market* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

professional classes, further disempowered the city's low-income communities. "Zero-tolerance" and "quality-of-life" policing—both by the New York Police Department (NYPD) and by school safety agents—were synonyms for the criminalization of behaviors formerly not enforced or alternatively resolved, which greatly contributed to the mass incarceration of people of color (already underway with the War on Drugs, itself merely the latest in a series of "Wars" previously waged against Poverty and Crime).[26]

If New York City is the quintessential neoliberal metropolis, then Michael Bloomberg is its analog as the quintessential neoliberal mayor. Neither Republican nor Democrat, this ostensible "independent" ran on a platform that provided as his chief credentials for city governance his billionaire status and business acumen. In some respects, he was as good as his word. His leadership saw the further corporatization of city governance, the city itself, and its residents. Julian Brash and Arlene Dávila have explored how this corporatization imports the neoliberal idiom of business—profitability, brand identity, and sustainability—into the reform of social services, and urban and economic development policy, with increasingly negative consequences for the city's low-income communities and communities of color.[27] The confirmation of New York City as a tourism destination and playground for the

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[26] See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010). For the War on Drugs' disparate affect on women of color, see Patricia Allard, "Crime, Punishment, and Economic Violence," in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (2006). And Meda Chesney-Lind, "Imprisoning Women: The Unintended Victims of Mass Imprisonment," in *The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment*, ed. Marc Mauer and Meda Chesney-Lind (2002).
[27] Arlene Dávila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

national and international wealthy elite now played out in cultural terms, as a

rebranding that re-imagined the city as:

> …a place of competition, elite sociality, cosmopolitanism, and luxury, populated
> by ambitious, creative, hardworking, and intelligent innovators. […] This ensured
> that conflicts over the administration's urban and economic development policy
> would not be civil debates of the best technical 'solutions' to the city's 'problems'
> but pitched battles over what kind of city New York was, and what kind of city it
> would be.[28]

As with neoliberalism writ large, much of the cultural work of neoliberalism specific

to New York City was done under the guise of neutrality and efficiency.

Indeed, the cultural work of neoliberalism has arguably had just as massive an

impact on court-involved girls as the economic work has. The juvenile and criminal

justice system perpetuates a dominant ideology that gives primacy to the individual

(defined in loaded terms), that cherishes and perpetuates in numerous ways bromides

about individual success and personal responsibility, and that admonishes girls,

through the messages and policies aimed at them, and the systems they encounter

daily, that their struggles are their own fault.

Scholars of neoliberalism and its processes make an important distinction

between neoliberalism and "neoliberalization." This is not just a matter of semantics.

While the former suggests a totalizing, stable, and static ideology, the latter indicates

> a processual conception […] as both an "out there" and an "in here" phenomenon
> whose effects are necessarily variegated and uneven, but the incidence and
> diffusion of which may present clues to a pervasive "metalogic." Like
> globalization, neoliberalization should be understood as a process, not an end-
> state. By the same token, it is also contradictory, it tends to provoke
> countertendencies, and it exists in historically and geographically contingent

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[28] Julian Brash, *Bloomberg's New York: Class and Governance in the Luxury City*
(Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2011). 18.

forms.[29]

In the stories of the girls with whom I worked, neoliberalism was indeed a process, full of contradictions. All the same, I side with David Harvey's suggestion that "neoliberalization was from the beginning a project to achieve the restoration of class power."[30] Drawing on the work of Lisa Duggan and others, in the chapters that follow I tease out some of the ways that this consolidation and defense of class power relies on the organization of "material and political life *in terms of* race, gender, and sexuality as well as economic class and nationality, or ethnicity and religion" at the same time that its discourses "*actively obscure* the connections among these organizing terms."[31] Much of neoliberalism's perniciousness lies in the degree to which its tenets were, and continue to be, justified and reinforced subtly via the national discourse. Duggan identifies two general policy projects that illustrate the hand-in-glove relationship between the economic policies and cultural practices of neoliberalism (both of which affect the lives of the young women mandated to the STARS program): welfare "reform" and latter-day (post-Nixon) "law and order" initiatives. In both arenas, neoliberals have promoted "private" competition, self-esteem, and independence, and excoriated "public" entitlement, dependency, and irresponsibility as the sources of social ills.[32] As the private prison industry, mass incarceration, and "zero-tolerance" and "quality-of-life" saw a drastic uptick in the mid-1990s, welfare reforms saw the drastic cutbacks of state support for women and

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[29] Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space," *Antipode* 34(2002). 383.
[30] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 16.
[31] Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003). 3.
[32] Ibid. 14.

children in particular. It is worth noting here, as Duggan does, the persistent and "underlying assumption [that] the sexual practices and household structures of poor women, especially Black women, are the central causes of poverty and of associated social disorder and criminality."[33] This harkening back to the era of the infamous Moynihan report is no accident.[34] In fact, it is reflective of Loïc Wacquant's observation that neoliberal nostrums "did not spring spontaneously, ready-made, out of reality. They partake of a vast constellation of terms and theses [...] on crime, violence, justice, inequality, and responsibility—of the individual, of the 'community.'"[35]

Many of these "terms and theses," in fact, harken back to the Enlightenment and the founding principles of the country: reason, individuality, freedom, truth, and social progress. But as François Lyotard has argued, under Keynesianism, communism was eliminated as an economic alternative and individualism was already beginning to be defined through the lens of "enjoyment of goods and

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[33] Ibid. 16. Additionally, a note on nomenclature: I draw on Kimberlé Crenshaw in my capitalization of "Black" throughout this dissertation. As she writes, "I use 'Black' and 'African-American' interchangeably throughout this article. I capitalize 'Black' because 'Blacks, like *A*sians, *L*atinos, and other "minorities" constitute a specific cultural group and, as such, require denotation as a proper noun. By the same token, I do not capitalize "white," which is not a proper noun, since whites do not constitute a specific cultural group." For the same reason I, like she, do not capitalize youth of color, girls of color, young women of color, etc. For more on this, see Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43(1991). 1244.
[34] I discuss this report and its symbolic import in Chapter Two.
[35] Loïc Wacquant, "How Penal Common Sense Comes to Europeans: Notes on the Transatlantic Diffusion of the Neoliberal *Doxa*," *European Societies* 1(1999). 320.

services."[36] Under neoliberalism, these ideals and cultural trends conjoin explicitly

with market values to make responsibility, independence, individualism, and

privatization the major discursive tropes of neoliberal ideology, now arriving with a

moral overlay that disguises the racialized class-power consolidation its policies

promote. The first two are terms that surfaced regularly during my discussions with

the STARS participants, and heavily structure their interpretations of their roles as

girlfriends, daughters, and caregivers (whether of their own or others' children).

The Logic-of-Violence Double-Bind

Beneath this power-consolidation lies a logic of violence. The unprecedented

"cleaning up" of New York City that occurred alongside the city's neoliberalization is

predicated on and made possible by the exercise of state violence in the form of overt

abuse at the hands of those working within state-run institutions and the laissez-faire

sanctioning of interpersonal and community violence against people of color, women,

and the LGBTQ community.[37] This consolidation of power through what is, to the

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[36] François Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge," in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Cahoone (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). 264.

[37] When I use the term "state violence" in the pages that follow, I draw on the work of Michel-Rolph Troillot, who suggests that "the state" might best be understood as an "open field with multiple boundaries and no institutional fixity—which is to say that it needs to be conceptualized at more than one level. Though linked to a number of apparatuses not all of which may be governmental, the state is not an apparatus but a set of processes. It is not necessarily bound by any institution, nor can any institution fully encapsulate it. At that level, its materiality resides much less in institutions than in the reworking of processes and relations of power so as to create new spaces for the deployment of power." Michel-Rolph Troillot, "The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind," *Current Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2001). 127. In this context, "state violence" refers to the violence that attends many of these "reworking[s] of processes and relations of

privileged classes, often invisible violence is in fact part of a legacy of historical

power consolidation along the axes of race, class, gender, and sexuality made

possible through violence against so-called "minority" groups, especially women of

color.[38] Dylan Rodríguez traces this legacy "from racial chattel slavery and frontier

genocide to recent and current modes of land displacement," which are

"sociologically entangled with the state's changing paradigms, strategies, and

technologies of human incarceration and punishment."[39] While I am not suggesting

that the most recent articulation of this violence is the result of any explicit or

articulable intention to destroy communities of color, I do suggest it is one of the

primary mechanisms by which business elites have achieved and maintained power in

New York City's governance. Beyond that, the patterns by which middle-upper and

upper classes have come to enjoy the "luxury economy" this city provides have come

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power." For more on this, see George Lipsitz, "'In an Avalanche Every Snowflake Pleads Not Guilty': The Collateral Consequences of Mass Incarceration and Impediments to Women's Fair Housing Rights," *UCLA Law Review* 59 (2012)., T.L. King, "One Strike Evictions, State Space and the Production of Abject Female Bodies," *Critical Sociology* 36, no. 1 (2010)., K Bumiller, *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Agaist Sexual Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

[38] This literature includes work that traces the intersections of these forces on women of color, drawing attention to what Kimberlé Crenshaw calls the "disjunctures between feminism and antiracism issues that have been contested by grassroots and academic feminists of color for decades." See Crenshaw, "From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally About Women, Race, and Social Control."; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color."; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981); Cherríe Maraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Latham, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981); Deborah L. King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988); INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence and Critical Resistance, "Statement on Gender VIolence and the Prison Industrial Complex," (2001).

[39] Dylan Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). 11.

squarely at the expense of low-income communities and other vulnerable populations. There is a growing literature on the ways the need and greed of the neoliberal city have affected Black men, the LGBTQ community, women of color, immigrant communities, and communities of color. [40] I am here interested in the specific ways it affects court-involved young women.

I argue that girls and young women of color confront the perfect articulation of this logic of violence—what I have termed "the logic-of-violence double-bind." This formulation of "the-logic-of-violence double-bind" builds on the insights of systems theorist Gregory Bateson. Bateson developed his double-bind theory while working with schizophrenics, looking to understand their behavior in the context of their families. I do not apply this theory in my work because I believe court-involved girls are mentally ill, nor because I believe they belong to pathological family units. Rather, I find the concept a useful heuristic for framing the ways court-involved girls talk about their experiences in the context of the state, its structures, and the current neoliberal system (which, I suggest, *is* pathological).

According to Bateson, "all messages and parts of messages are like phrases or segments of equations which a mathematician puts in brackets. Outside the brackets there may always be a qualifier or multiplier which will alter the whole tenor of the

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[40] See, for instance, Andrea McArdle and Tanya Erzen, *Zero Tolerance: Quality of Life and the New Police Brutality in New York City* (New York: New York University, 2001); Manalansan, "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City." Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime*. Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, & Race in U.S. Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California.*

phrase."[41] There is the original thing—the message—and then its context—the meta-message. The context might be tone of voice or non-verbal cues (e.g. eye-rolling, laughter, gestures, etc.), which can drastically alter the meaning of the message itself, changing it from literal to metaphorical or from ironic to direct. The message and meta-message are often imperfectly aligned, and sometimes even directly contradict one another. When this is the case, in the context of the communication relationship, the receiver of the message is put in the untenable position of having to respond to a statement that, at face value, means one thing, but given its context, means the opposite. If the receiver attempts to acknowledge the disjunction, however, she is punished—the threat of which punishment constitutes a further meta-message. It this pairing of irreconcilable meanings, paired with a power differential, or threat of violence, that constitutes Bateson's "double-bind." The double-bind, he writes, "is an experience of being punished precisely for being right in one's own view of the context," a context that cannot be acknowledged without punishment.[42] This concept may be extended beyond the simple communication acts to ideas, experiences, and events.

Once they become court-involved, girls are confronted by a series of institutions (i.e. those of law and order) that tell them explicitly, "I am doing this for your own good" ("this" being essentially any permutation of court-imposed mandates to social services, curfew, education or vocational involvement, or detainment). While this paternalism has been the animating force behind juvenile justice since its

[41] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 2000 ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972). 232-3.
[42] Ibid. 236.

inception, under neoliberalism this message arrives cloaked in the neoliberal language

of empowerment and freedom of choice: "You should make the right choice for your

own good."[43] This elides girls' own experiences of these institutions as dangerous.

The context, or meta-message, is "I am forcing you to interact with numerous other

institutions or entities (e.g. family, peers, schools, jails or prisons) that may be

dangerous." And when, in these other arenas, girls respond to the violence they

encounter—emotional violence, physical and sexual abuse, fights and other forms of

physical altercations—in ways they believe will decrease their exposure to violence

(which they are often explicitly instructed by the court to do), ways that are surely

logical within those alternate systems, they are punished. Girls might, for instance,

hit their mothers if they are being choked by them; they might carry knives to school

if they have been threatened by peers whom they know also carry knives; they might

steal guns from tricks whom they believe will use the weapons against them

otherwise.[44] These methods of self-protection, however, are precisely those things

that lead to them being, in the richly-ironic parlance of the criminal justice system,

"violated" by their judges, the programs who provide them services and monitor their

compliance, or the Department of Probation…and consequently exposed to more

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[43] For more on the history of paternalism in the juvenile justice system, see Margaret
K. Rosenheim et al., eds., *A Century of Juvenile Justice* (Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 2002). And Barry C. Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of
the Juvenile Court* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[44] "Tricks" here refers to men who solicit sex from persons engaging in prostitution.
Historically, those involved in the life of prostitution have been considered
impossible to rape. This dissertation sides with those who argue that, rather, sex
workers are often exposed to serious and ongoing violence. For more on this, see J.
Raphael and D.L. Shapiro, "Violence In Indoor and Outdoor Prostitution," *Violence
Against Women* 10, no. 2 (2004).

violence.[45] Further, I suggest that "the logic-of-violence double-bind"—an explicit

message of caretaking, support, or safety with a meta-message, or context, of implied

or actual violence—confronts them in virtually every facet of their lives: at the

personal level, in their homes, through their families and romantic partnerships; at the

community level, through their friendships, peer groups, neighbors, and the built

environment; and at the structural level, through their interactions with schools, the

child welfare system and social service systems, the police, and the criminal justice

system.[46] This double-bind seems to be an artifact of neoliberal cultural transmission

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[45] For the sake of clarity, "violated" when used in this context means that someone
has "failed to abide" by the terms set out by the Department of Probation. Usually,
she either faces hefty fines, is sanctioned by the court (meaning an increase in
responsibilities to or contact with the court), or is re-sentenced to prison. The
Department of Probation can "violate" individuals under its supervision for any
number of things, from testing positive for drugs to missing regular visits to the
probation office. The overlap of this terminology with girls' experiences of physical
violation is, at best, indicative of the disconnect between institutional premises and
ideological orientation and the girls', and will be discussed further in Chapter Five.
[46] It is with a great deal of personal conflict that I frame this chapter with these
statements. Over the last decade I have intentionally approached my work with
young people from a positive youth development standpoint, believing that this
method, which views young people as resistant and resilient, is the most effective in
meeting the vast but variant emotional and developmental needs of adolescents,
particularly those labeled "at risk". In approaching this project, I was very conscious
about trying to avoid applying the traditional deficit model, which looks at court-
involved youth as villains or victims, in designing the data collection and analysis, a
fault of much scholarship on young women, youth of color, low-income youth, and
girls of color. For more on positive youth development, see Peter L. Benson,
"Adolescent Development in Social and Community Context: A Program of
Research," *New Directions for Youth Development* 95(2002); J.A. Durlak et al.,
"Effects of Positive Youth Development Programs on School, Family, and
Community Systems," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 1 (2007);
R.M. Lerner and Peter L. Benson, eds., *Developmental Assets and Asset-Building
Communities: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice* (Norwell, MA: Kluwer
Academic Publishers, 2002); Reed Larson, "Positive Youth Development, Willful
Adolescents, and Mentoring," *Journal of Community Psychology* 34, no. 6 (2006). In
recent years there has been increased interest in introducing these principles into
court-based and –mandated programming. See Jeffrey A. Butts, Gordon Bazemore,

itself. Indeed, the inherently contradictory, processual, and historically- and geographically-contingent nature of neoliberalization creates double-binds in three distinct ways. The first preserves the language of pathology from the era of the Moynihan report, but introduces a new economic and cultural context of disinvestment; the second introduces a new message of empowerment and personal responsibility, that is contradicted by the historical realities of structural race and gender oppression; the third introduces both new messages and contexts, the incommensurability of which arise directly from neoliberalism's own internal contradictions.

After the bulk of my data had been analyzed and most of this dissertation written, Beth E. Richie's most recent study, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*, was published. This study aligns neatly with the arguments I make here. Richie argues that Black women experience a unique form of racialized and gendered oppression that facilitates their disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system, or what she terms "prison nation." She situates her argument within the grassroots anti-violence movement, and argues for the adoption of an intersectional conceptual framework and analytic tool she terms "The Male Violence Matrix," which tracks the combined pressures of male violence,

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and Audra Saa Meroe, "Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development," (Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2010); Emily Buss, "What the Law Should (and Should Not) Learn from Child Development Research," *Hofstra Law Review* 38(2009); Gordon Bazemore and J. Stinchcomb, "Involving Community Through Service and Restorative Justice: Theory and Practice for a Civic Engagement Model of Reentry," *Federal Probation* 68, no. 2 (2004); Gordon Bazemore, "Pillars of Youth Justice Reform: Postive Youth Development, Restorative Justice, and the Role of Community," (Reclaiming Futures Leadership Institute).

multiply-articulated violence, and ideologies of race, gender, sexuality, and class (Appendix E).[47] This matrix provides an excellent visual representation of the tiers this dissertation explores, and gestures toward the wider applicability of my findings.

Court-involved girls are forced to confront the totality of this violence on an almost daily basis, and to make snap calculations about how best to respond to its microprocesses, and within which logical framework. Cherisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden's work highlights a similar tension between the messages Black women receive and the contexts within which they receive them, and describes a reaction the authors term "shifting." They write:

> Black women are relentlessly pushed to serve and satisfy others and made to hide their true selves to placate White colleagues, Black men, and other segments of the community. They shift to accommodate differences in class as well as gender and ethnicity. From one moment to the next, they change their outward behavior, attitude, or tone, shifting 'White,' then shifting 'Black' again, shifting 'corporate,' shifting 'cool.' And shifting has become such an integral part of Black women's behavior that some adopt an alternate pose or voice as easily as they blink their eyes or draw breath—without thinking, and without realizing that the emptiness they feel and the roles they must play may be directly related.[48]

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[47] Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*. 132-3.

[48] Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double-Lives of Black Women in America* (New York: Perennial, 2003). 7. I am indebted to Joshua Woodfork for introducing me to this concept, one which he explores in the context of bi-racial families. For more, see Joshua Carter Woodfork, "Shifting Whiteness: A Life History Approach to U.S. White Parents of "Biracial" or "Black" Children" (University of Maryland, College Park, 2005). This is related to what Darlene Clark Hine describes as a "culture of dissembling" that arises directly as a result of a history of rape and threatened sexual violence against Black women. She writes: "the behavior and attitudes of Black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors." Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989). 1. This shades into the kind of "code-switching" and "behavior-switching" described by Elijah Anderson, Nikki Jones, and John L. Jackson, respectively. Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Nikki Jones, *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City*

The concept of "shifting" is a useful one, as it describes neatly the contradictory messages Black women and women of color receive, their varied contexts, and the tactics women of color use to navigate the two. I counter, however, that the young women of color with whom I worked were much more conscious of what they did and when, strategically shifting for reasons of their own. And I suggest that what girls articulate as the ways to survive and avoid victimization in these various contexts—the ways in which they "shift"—are often *precisely* those which the court system and its surrounding discourses—strengthened and maintained by the vernaculars and processes of neoliberal ideology—interpret as anti-social, deviant, and delinquent.

Dissertation Organization

In the chapters that follow, I work from the micro—girls' personal relationships—to the macro—the structures within which they are embedded—to trace the ways in which the logic-of-violence double-bind presents girls with a series of what Richie has described as "hard choices among, at times, very poor options."[49] Chapter Two creates what I call a "genealogy of youth justice," detailing the recent history of youth justice in the U.S. generally and New York specifically. As part of that effort, I situate this project within its varied academic conversations, and explore how this dissertation works against prevailing trends, academic and not, to bring girls' voices

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Violence (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2010); John L. Jackson, Jr., *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[49] Beth E. Richie, *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered Black Women* (New York: Routledge, 1996). 1.

and experiences to the fore; I also discuss the methodological and representational challenges inherent to that effort. The three chapters that follow locate the iterations of the logic-of-violence double-bind as they occur at various levels in which girls move. Chapter Three explores the logic-of-violence double-bind at the interpersonal level, in girls' relationships with their families and romantic partnerships. Chapter Four examines its operation at the community level, particularly in girls' friendships, peer groups, neighbors, and the built environment. Chapter Five traces its presence at the structural level, through girls' interactions with schools, social-service systems, the police, the criminal justice system, and the wider prison archipelago. I have purposely arranged the chapters in this way to de-familiarize the material that will likely be the most recognizable to the bulk of my readers, i.e. girls' structural involvement. Such an approach, I argue, is essential for truly understanding the forces working on and against these young women, and for making evident their insurgent knowledge and the true nature of their agency. I conclude with a chapter that imagines a way forward, one that builds from girls' experiences and world-view.

Chapter Two
Towards a Genealogy of Youth Justice

I realize that, with even so much involvement in explanation as this, I am liable seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, to obscure what would at best be hard enough to give its appropriate clarity and intensity; and what seems to me most important of all: namely, that these I will write of are human beings, living in this world...; and that they were dwelt among, investigated, spied on, revered, and loved, by other quite monstrously alien human beings, in the employment of still other still more alien human beings; and that they are now being looked into by still others, who have picked up their living as casually as if it were a book, and who were actuated toward this reading by various possible reflexes of sympathy, curiosity, idleness, et cetera, and almost certainly in a lack of consciousness, and conscience, remotely appropriate to the enormity of what they are doing.

-James Agee[50]

Recent scholarship by Beth E. Richie, Nikki Jones, Laurie Schaffner, Jyoti Nanda, Meda Chesney-Lind and Katherine Irwin, and Cindy D. Ness reveals an increased academic interest in the raced and gendered experiences of court-involved girls and young women of color.[51] Each of these projects, in slightly different ways

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[50] James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988). 12-13.

[51] Richie's valuable studies are perhaps the closest in scope and argument to my own; she situates her work in the context of the anti-violence movement, however, and so her analysis proceeds from that vantage point, giving less attention to the way neoliberal discourse and policy facilitate girls' contact with the justice system. See Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*; Richie, "Queering Antiprison Work: African American Lesbians in the Juvenile Justice System." Also, Laurie Schaffner, *Girls in Trouble with the Law* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Jones, *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence*; Jyoti Nanda, "Blind Discretion: Girls of Color & Delinquency in the Juvenile Justice System," *UCLA Law Review*

and for different reasons (e.g. length restrictions, discipline-specific practices, etc.),

tells only part of the story, often looking at girls' court-involvement *qua* delinquency.

That is to say, none of these scholars presents a sustained investigation of specifically

girls' experiences in their daily lives and the micro-processes through which larger

systemic forces affect them. Eliding either the micro-processes or the macro-

processes, studies end up inadvertently reproducing neoliberalism's individualism. In

this chapter I offer a partial remedy. I trace the recent history of youth justice in the

U.S., highlighting the relationships among the criminalization of urban youth of

color, trends in the approach to law and order, and neoliberal ideology. I place this

against discussions of court-involved girls in the literatures that frame my work, and

argue that rather than wrenching the life stories of young women out of context and

using them as additional tools to pathologize and criminalize them, a methodology

that works *from* girls' situated knowledge to unearth what remains obscured in other

approaches—a systemic analysis, in the fullest sense of the term—is essential to any

real comprehension of their experiences of and with the criminal justice system.

Recent Local Reforms

At the time this project was framed and researched—2008-2009—New York City's

response to youth crime was woefully antiquated by most everyone's standards.

Missouri, Illinois, and several other states were pioneering rehabilitative, therapeutic,

and strengths-based models of juvenile justice that focused on keeping youth out of

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59(2012); Cindy D. Ness, "Why Girls Fight: Female Youth Violence in the Inner
City," *The ANNALS of the American Society of Political and Social Science* 595, no.
1 (2004); Meda Chesney-Lind and Katherine Irwin, *Beyond Bad Girls: Gender,
Violence, and Hype* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

residential placement facilities—i.e., prisons for youth—and engaged in after-school

programs, job training, and creative enterprises centered in their communities.

Meanwhile, New York City was relying on a "lock 'em up" approach rooted in the

"super-predator" hysteria of the 1990s.[52] In fact, New York City was sending

upwards of 850 young people annually to secure and limited facilities, placing

another 150 in non-secure facilities —essentially group homes.[53] The majority of

these young people had been convicted of low-level crimes like marijuana possession,

trespassing, assaults, robbery, transit-fare evasion, and graffiti. Despite the fact that

many of these crimes are known to prosecutors and defense attorneys as "low

hanging fruit," their effects on the young people institutionalized for committing them

were profound. The facilities used to incarcerate young people are almost all located

in upstate New York, hours away from young peoples' families, communities, and

support networks. By 2009, New York was spending more than $266,000 annually to

keep a young person incarcerated in an OCFS facility. The annualized costs to detain

a young person in New York City, in a pre-trial detention facility, were almost as

much, at $237,615. By comparison, community-based non-residential programming

is significantly cheaper, with estimates running from $600 to almost $10,000 in 2000

dollars.[54]

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[52] Deriving from a report published by sociologist John DiIulio, I explore the "super-predator" myth at length later in this chapter.
[53] Office of Children and Family Services, "Annual Report: Youth Placed in OCFS Custody," (New York2008).
[54] Gabrielle Prisco, "When the Cure Makes You Ill: Seven Core Principles to Change the Course of Youth Justice," *New York Law School Law Review* 56(2011/2012).1444.

Young people fared little better in the (adult) criminal justice system than they did in its juvenile analogue. For several years, New York has also held the dubious distinction of being one of two states that placed the age for criminal responsibility at 16. That is, with the exception of North Carolina, New York is the only state in the Union where all 16 and 17 year olds are routinely charged, held, tried, and incarcerated as and with adults. Youth held alongside adults face considerable threat. Though young people under 18 are one percent of the total adult jail detainees, U.S. Bureau of Justice statistics indicate that in 2005 and 2006, they represented 21% and 13%, respectively, of the victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails. Youth have the highest suicide rates of all inmates in jails, being 19 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population. Moreover, they are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in adult jail facilities than in juvenile justice facilities.[55]

In late 2009 and 2010 several factors converged to bring about a sea change. First, in 2006, Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union published a report on the state of facilities for girls in New York. This report outlined a pattern of isolation and abuse in the form of physical restraints, disproportionate punishment for disciplinary infractions, and lack of medical and psychiatric care that was beyond the pale even in the world of juvenile and criminal justice, and suggested that the state's youth facilities were among the worst in the world.[56] Around the same time, a spate of violent incidents involving young people—including the deaths of two young men—occurred in youth facilities run by the state's Office of Children and

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[55] Neelum Arya, "Jailing Juveniles: The Dangers of Incarcerating Youth in Adult Jails in America," (Washington, D.C.: The Campaign for Youth Justice, 2007). 4.
[56] Mie Lewis, "Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls," (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2006).

Family Services (OCFS). Taken together, these events prompted the U.S.

Department of Justice (DOJ) to launch an investigation into the conditions of youth

facilities. Meanwhile, a joint investigation by the New York state inspector general

and the Tompkins County district attorney into allegations of abuse at the Louis

Gossett Jr. Residential Center, a medium-secure facility located in that county, found

that the independent ombudsman's office charged with overseeing youth prison

facilities had virtually ceased to function.[57]   Shortly thereafter, New York's then-

governor, David Patterson, convened a task force led by Jeremy Travis, president of

John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, to look into the state's

current juvenile justice practices and make recommendations for reform.[58] In the

summer of 2009, the DOJ investigation released its findings to Patterson in a letter

that highlighted such problems as use of excessive force and inappropriate restraints,

failure to adequately investigate use-of-force incidents, failure to take corrective

action in cases of staff misconduct, and the inadequate provision of mental health

services for residents; the findings were so problematic, in fact, that the report raised

the possibility of a federal takeover at four facilities unless a series of changes were

implemented.[59] Later that year, Governor Paterson's task force released its

recommendations, initiating a flurry of reform efforts on the city and state levels. The

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[57] Nicholas Confessore, "4 Youth Prisons in New York Used Excessive Force," *New York Times* 2009. For more details about the allegations and the results of the investigation, see State of New York Office of the Inspector Genderal and the Office of the Tompkins County District Attorney, "Report on the Louis Gossett Jr. Residential Center," (New York2006).
[58] The Vera Institute of Justice, "Charting a New Course: A Blueprint for Transforming Juvenile Justice in New York State."
[59] United States of America v. The State of New York and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, July 14, 2009. Accessed 3 December, 2011, at http://www.justice.gov/opa/documents/compliant-07142010.pdf.

results have included significant downsizing of the state agency responsible for young people in placement, the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS). In fact, the number of youth in state-operated placement facilities has declined almost 75% since 2000—from 2,313 in 2000/2001 to 589 in 2011/2012.[60]

In September, 2011, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman publicly called upon state officials to approve raising the age of criminal responsibility to the age of 18.[61] He urged the state's sentencing commission to draft legislation for the state legislature in January, 2012, while simultaneously initiating the design and implementation of an Adolescent Diversion Part (ADP), a pilot program to begin treating 16 and 17 year olds charged with non-violent offenses in a manner more consistent with Family Court (i.e. less "tough on crime" and more inclined toward "rehabilitation," with an emphasis on strengthening families and providing young people with necessary social services). The 2011-2012 legislative session saw the introduction of two "raise the age" bills. The first, introduced by Assemblyperson Joseph Lentol in partnership with the Office of Court Administration, would create a "youth diversion" part in adult criminal court, mirroring the structure of the current ADP pilot. The second, introduced by Senator Velmanette Montgomery, would change the law so that most cases of young people 18 and under would become part of the city's juvenile justice system. While both bills failed to pass in that legislative session, there is general consensus that at least one bill addressing the "age of criminal responsibility" will be

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[60] Horowitz-Prisco, "The State of Youth Justice: 2012 in Review, A Deeper Dive." 6.
[61] The Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Practice &Criminal Practice. Testimony to the Council of the City of New York, November 1, 2011. Accessed 26 November, 2011, http://www.legal-aid.org/media/151080/testimony110111.pdf.

raised in the next legislative session.[62] The result of these juvenile- and criminal-

justice reform efforts has been a rapid movement away from anachronistic punitive

responses and toward an attempt to craft both rhetoric and policy focused on

extensive service provision and connecting youth to a "continuum

of care" in their communities.

National Trends in Youth Justice

These reforms are modest steps to address the exponential increase in aggregate rates

of incarceration in the U.S. over the last fifty years; indeed, estimates run anywhere

between a 500 and 700% increase in the number of detainees.[63] It is not coincidental

that this is the time period during which, as David Harvey, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and

Lisa Duggan have argued, neoliberalism arose as a set of policy preferences and

discursive practices. Currently, nearly one percent of the entire adult U.S. population

is incarcerated, at a cost of $68 billion annually.[64] Moreover, this unprecedented

increase in the celling of U.S. citizens has profound racial and ethnic dimensions. As

Marc Mauer notes:

> if current trends continue, 1 of every 3 African American males born today can
> expect to go to prison in his lifetime, as can 1 of every 6 Latino males, compared
> to 1 in 17 White males. For women, the overall figures are considerably lower,
> but the racial/ethnic disparities are similar: 1 of every 18 African American
> females, 1 of every 45 Hispanic females, and 1 of every 111 White females can
> expect to spend time in prison.[65]

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[62] Horowitz-Prisco, "The State of Youth Justice: 2012 in Review, A Deeper Dive." 5.
[63] Rebecca Ruiz, "Eyes on the Prize: Our Moral and Ethical Duty to End Mass
Incarceration," *The American Prospect* 22, no. 1 (2010). 3; Harvey, *A Brief History of
Neoliberalism*.
[64]Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.
[65] Marc Mauer, "Addressing Racial Disparities in Incarceration," *The Prison Journal*
91, no. 3 (2011). 88S.

For young people, the demographic statistics look strikingly similar. Youth arrest and placement/incarceration rates for youth of color are vastly out of proportion with their numbers in the wider population. Furthermore, while these incarceration rates have begun to fall, they aren't dropping nearly as quickly as, or in concert with, arrest rates. The juvenile arrest rate reached its highest level in the last two decades in 1996, after which it began to steadily decline (Table 1).[66]

Table 1: Juvenile Arrest Rates for All Crimes, 1980-2010

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10-17, 1980-2010

Note: Rates are arrests of persons ages 10-17 per 100,000 persons ages 10-17 in the resident population.
Source: OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book, 2011.

As arrest rates surged briefly in the mid-'90s, so too did violent crime among youth. Some studies have cited an almost 70% rise in youth arrest rates for violent offenses, and a nearly 300% rise in youth homicide arrest rates from 1983 to 1994.[67] These

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[66] Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book," (Online 2012).
[67] Chesney-Lind and Irwin, *Beyond Bad Girls: Gender, Violence, and Hype*. 24.

rises are generally attributed to the introduction of crack cocaine to low-income urban communities, increased gun distribution, and an increase in gang activity.

However, it is essential that these numbers not eclipse the subtle discursive work being done by criminologists and politicians to pathologize urban communities of color, most specifically African-American and Latino communities. As early as 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's infamous report to President Nixon on the urban Black family places much of the blame for what he calls the "tangle of pathology" dominating "urban ghettos" on the fact that young Black men grow up in homes headed by "domineering" women—a direct invocation of the infamous "Sapphire" stereotype of Black womanhood.[68] Moynihan argued that because there were "no" male heads-of-house, these young Black men (to say nothing of the young Black women) were raised, "never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any set of rational expectations about the future—that community asks for and gets chaos. *Crime, violence, unrest, disorder are not only to be expected, but they are very richly deserved.*"[69]

Neoliberal Ideology and the Birth of the "Super-Predator"

The current construction of the criminal as young, Black or Latino, pathological, and out of control is a holdover from this previous ideological discourse, now repurposed as a lever for neoliberal economic and policy changes, and disseminated through the

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[68] For more on this, see Cheryl T. Gilkes, "From Slavery to Social Welfare: Racism and the Control of Black Women," in *Class, Race, and Sex: They Dynamics of Control*, ed. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna Lessinger (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1983).
[69] Qtd. Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). 33, my emphasis.

same cultural channels used to promote welfare cuts. Under neoliberalism, criminal

behavior is reframed as a " bad choice" made by a free actor.   Even as it purports to

point the way to a life *liberated* from institutions besides the market, it marks the

continued *diffusion* of this administrative point-of-view from a specialized discourse

into mass culture. (It is an incomplete project, to be sure; as in the era of Moynihan,

pockets of cultural resistance to the narrative persist.) John DiIulio, in a series of

articles on race and crime that were published in the early to mid '90s, established

himself firmly in the political tradition of the Moynihan report. "All that is left of the

'Black community' in some pockets of urban America is deviant, delinquent, and

criminal adults surrounded by severely abused and neglected children, virtually all of

whom were born out of wedlock."[70] DiIulio and likeminded scholars promulgated

the myth of the "super-predator": young men, coded as Black, with no empathy and

killer instincts. The media latched on to this phenomenon and it soon spiraled into a

frenzy that directed legislation for almost a decade.[71]

       This discourse, then, fed back into the world it purported to describe,

illustrating so neatly Berger and Luckmann's observations about the social

construction of reality itself.[72]   Over the next 20 years, the specter of out-of-control,

violent, primarily African-American boys haunted policing, and juvenile and criminal

justice policy, as well as the discourses about crime that would come to dominate in

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[70] Qtd. Ibid. 107.

[71] Ibid. For more on this, see John DiIulio, "The Coming of the Super-Predators,"
The Weekly Standard 27, no. 23 (1995). It should be noted that DiIulio soon
thereafter worked to distance himself from the concept of the super-predator.

[72] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A
Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967). In
particular, see pp. 41-46.

the media and politics. So although youth homicide and violent crime rates were already *dropping* steadily by 1994, youth incarceration rates have only begun to follow suit in the last five years, as advocates capitalized on the economic imperatives of the recession. And even so, incarceration rates have since fallen by less than half as much. In the 10 years between 1997 and 2007, the number of juveniles in residential

Table 2: US Juveniles in Residential Placement 1997 - 2007

Year	Male	Female
1997	90,000	14,000
2001	89,000	15,000
2007	75,000	11,000

Table 3: NY State Juveniles in Residential Placement 1997 - 2007

Year	Male	Female
1997	3,700	930
2001	3,650	900
2007	2,900	650
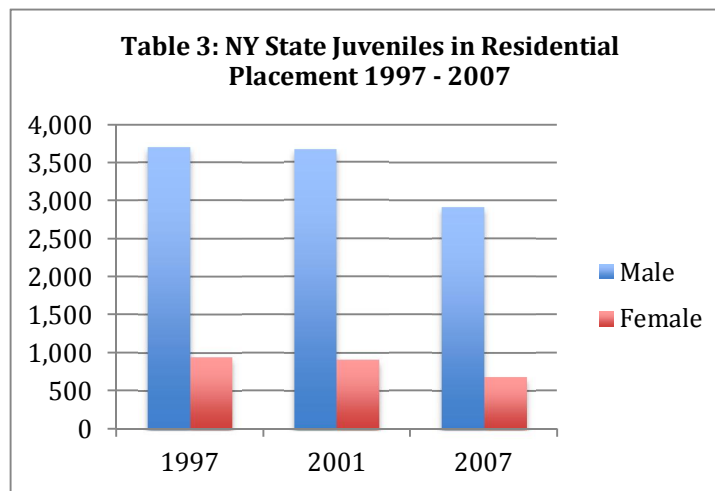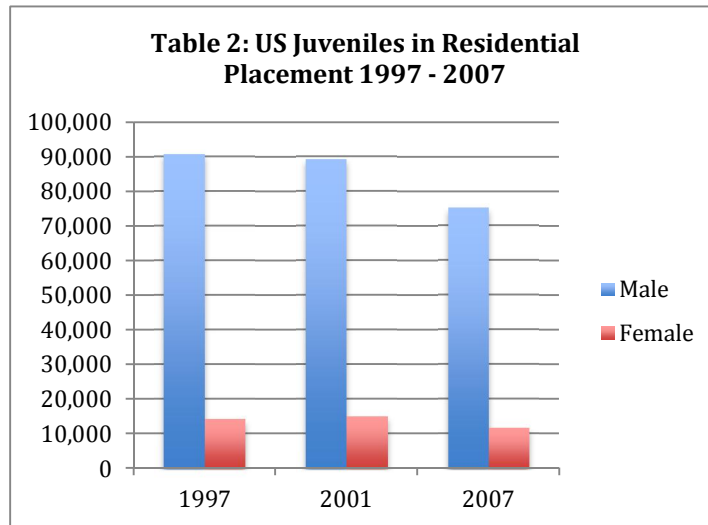
Source: OJJDP and NCJJ, Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement: 1997-2007.[73]

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[73] Office of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and National Center for Juvenile Justice, "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement," (Online). Accessed 2 December, 2011, at http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/.

placement (i.e. incarcerated youth), declined by 17% on the national level for both

boys and girls, and by 21% and 27% for boys and girls, respectively, in New York

State. This decline is clearly not proportionate to the 33% decline in arrest rates.

What this analysis overlooks, moreover, is the degree to which the super-

predator myth cloaked decades-long shifts in racialized policing and sentencing

practices, particularly "zero-tolerance" and "quality-of-life" policing strategies.[74]

Developed under Mayor Rudy Giuliani and perfected under Mayor Michael

Bloomberg, this approach is grounded in the "broken windows" theory of crime

reduction, which holds that issuing summonses for violations (e.g., panhandling,

public urination, public drunkenness, loitering) and arresting and prosecuting low-

level misdemeanor offenses (e.g. drug possession, prostitution, petit larceny),

combined with quickly mending visual representations of criminal activity such as

broken windows or graffiti, helps prevent further defacement of property and

escalation to more serious crimes. Heavy police surveillance and frequent street stops

in high-crime areas, with the goal of recovering weapons, have become hallmarks of

this approach.[75] One of the major results of "zero tolerance" policing has been the

criminalization of marijuana possession, particularly small amounts. Between 1981

and 1995, under three different mayors, New York City made a combined total of

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[74] The zero-tolerance strategy was first articulated in the early 1980s, but soon came
to dominate national discussions of crime reduction. See George L. Kelling and
James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The
Atlantic*, March 1982. For an introduction to critiques of this practice, see McArdle
and Erzen, *Zero Tolerance: Quality of Life and the New Police Brutality in New York
City*.
[75] For more on this see Brett G. Stoudt, Michelle Fine, and Madeline Fox, "Growing
Up Policed in the Age of Aggressive Policing Policies," *New York Law School Law
Review* 56(2011/12).

33,700 marijuana possession arrests (or an average of 2,300 per year); for the past

fifteen years, by contrast, New York averaged 36,000 marijuana possession arrests

per *year*.[76] In 2010 alone, there were more than 50,000 marijuana arrests.[77] In early

2012, for example, the NYPD came under strong criticism from communities and

advocacy groups for so-called "stop-and-frisk" practices. This policing strategy

found police unlawfully searching people—almost exclusively in low-income

communities of color—and then charging them for marijuana possession (see

Appendices C and D for maps New York City neighborhoods most affected by these

practices).[78]

Of those arrested for marijuana possession, teenagers and young adults

comprise the overwhelming majority.[79] Eighty-seven percent were Black or Latino.[80]

Arrests for criminal trespass also increased, from 14,053 in 2000 to 19,858. While

the percentage increase is still not as great as that for marijuana possession, it still

represents an increase by nearly half.[81] "Quality-of-life" infractions were those most

commonly used to pull young people into the juvenile and criminal justice systems;

of the young people placed in juvenile facilities, more than half of them were

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[76] Harry G. Levine and Loren Siegel, "$75 Million A Year: The Cost of New York City's Marijuana Possession Arrests," (New York: Drug Policy Alliance, 2011). 4.

[77] Ailsa Chang, "Alleged Illegal Searches by NYPD Rarely Challenged in Marijuana Cases, Pt. 2," WNYC, http://www.wnyc.org/articles/wnyc-news/2011/apr/27/alleged-illegal-searches/.

[78] Ailsa Chang, "Alleged Illegal Searched by NYPD May Be Increasing Marijuana Arrests," WNYC, http://www.wnyc.org/articles/wnyc-news/2011/apr/26/marijuana-arrests/.

[79] Levine and Siegel, "$75 Million A Year: The Cost of New York City's Marijuana Possession Arrests." 4.

[80] Ibid.

[81] New York City Police Department, "Citywide Misdemeanor Offenses 2000-2011," http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/analysis_and_planning/misdemeanor_offenses_2000_2011.pdf.

convicted of misdemeanor crimes. [82] And this fact gestures toward a larger reality: the pathologization and criminalization of *typical adolescent behavior* among young people of color over the last 40 years.

From Super-Predator to Gang Girls: Gendered Constructions of Youth Crime

As the gendered and racialized hysteria around the "super-predator" began to wane in the mid- to late-90s, it was replaced by two narratives about girls of color that persisted until the mid 2000s: "girls gone wild" and "gang girls." Meda Chesney-Lind and Katherine Irwin trace the origin of this coverage to a *Wall Street Journal* piece entitled "You've Come a Long Way, Moll," that began to trace the growing arrest rates for violent crimes among women and girls.[83] Media coverage of court- and gang-involved girls grew, and in the early 2000s was soon matched by—but notably, held distinct from—a growing body of media and popular literature on "mean girls," a category reserved by and large for white girls. An article in *Newsweek* from 2003 voiced concern about "savagery in the suburbs."[84] Another piece in 2005 suggested that the rise in violence amongst girls was "burgeoning into a national crisis."[85] A crop of books appeared around the same time tracking "mean

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[82] The Vera Institute of Justice and The New York State Taskforce of Juvenile Justice Indicators, "Widening the Lens, A Panoramic View of Juvenile Justice in New York State," (New York2007).

[83] D. Crittendon, "You've Come a Long Way, Moll," *Wall Street Journal*, January 25 1990. Qtd. Chesney-Lind and Irwin, *Beyond Bad Girls: Gender, Violence, and Hype*. 15.

[84] S. Meadows and D. Johnson, "Girl Fight: Savagery in the Chicago Suburbs," *Newsweek*, May 19 2003. Qtd. Chesney-Lind and Irwin, *Beyond Bad Girls: Gender, Violence, and Hype*. 1.

[85] J. Scelfo, "Bad Girls Go Wild," *Newsweek*, June 13 2005. Qtd. Margaret A. Zahn et al., "Violence by Teenage Girls: Trends and Context," in *Girls Study Group:*

girls." Books like *Reviving Ophelia, Odd Girl Out,* and *Queen Bees and Wannabees* all positioned girls at the nexus of poor self-esteem and cruelty, poised to victimize one another as they themselves were victimized.[86] What these books overlook, however, is that the shock value of stories of girls bullying and tormenting one another lies in the practice of this behavior by white, affluent, and well-heeled girls. Chesney-Lind and Irwin rightly suggest that "the 'discovery' of girls' meanness is simply a revisiting of a centuries-old pattern of stressing women's duplicitous nature—appearing superficially 'innocent' and 'nice' while actually being manipulative, devious, and occasionally evil."[87] I suggest that, in addition to being a gendered narrative, it is also a profoundly racialized one, for the designation of "innocent" or "nice" has not historically been part of the racist, sexist, and classist construction of Black womanhood.

Alongside these "mean girls" runs a similar, but notably different narrative about "gang girls." The mean girls are noteworthy for their verbal and social aggression, something from which the books' authors assume parents will want to protect their own daughters; gang girls' aggression, by contrast, is physical, and

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Understanding and Responding to Girls' Delinquency (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2008). 1.

[86] Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (New York: Ballantine, 1994).; R. Simmons, *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* (New York: Harcourt, 2002).; Rosalind Wiseman, *Queen Bees and Wannabees: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends and Other Realities of Adolescence.* (New York: Crown, 2002). See also James Garbarino, *See Jane Hit: Why Girls are Growing More Violent and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006). And Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Howard Spivak, *Sugar and Spice and No Longer Nice: How We Can Stop Girls' Violence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005). This trend can also be observed in popular culture, through such films as *Bring It On* (2000) and *Mean Girls* (2004).

[87] Chesney-Lind and Irwin, *Beyond Bad Girls: Gender, Violence, and Hype.* 12.

typically portrayed as individual pathology. Media coverage of these girls—almost always girls of color—follows contours similar to those of the "super-predator" stories, and almost never those of "mean girls" stories. Girls are depicted as out-of-control, frighteningly anti-social, and as guilty of individual moral failings rather than as victims who need parental and social assistance.[88] That is, where the mean girls' behavior is frightening because they are "our daughters," gang girls' behavior is frightening precisely because of these girls' "other-ness." Rather than an anomaly, this divide is merely another iteration of a long history of gendered racism, with roots in slavery and antebellum constructions of white womanhood as chaste and moral in nature, and Black womanhood as exotic, amoral, and highly sexualized.[89] This binary still exists in the ways these different kinds of girls are depicted, and, I will demonstrate, finds expression in the double-binds with which the STARS girls are confronted.

Attending this shift in focus from aggressive boys to aggressive girls was a growing disconnect between arrest rates and girls' reports of their own criminal behavior. While between 1980 and 2000, girls' arrests for assault (aggravated, simple and weapons violations) increased by 121%, 257%, and 134% respectively, during the period from 1991 to 2001 girls' self-reported involvement in physical fights *de*creased by six percent, and their reports of weapons possession decreased by about

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[88] The media coverage of both the "mean girl" and the "gang girl" are described in depth by Chesney-Lind and Irwin, Chapter 2, pp 11-31.

[89] This is discussed in depth in Chapter Three. For more, however, see Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005). And Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

five percent.[90] As with national arrest rates, girls' arrests in New York City have been

steadily increasing over the last decade, despite the drop in violent and felony crimes.

The number of girls arrested for misdemeanor assaults quadrupled between 1993 and

2002, from 93 to 410 respectively—even as felony assaults declined. Nationally,

girls in 2001 reported fighting one-third less than girls had a decade earlier; girls'

visits to hospitals for fight-related injuries has also dropped since 1991.[91] In short,

arrest rates for young people and the attendant likelihood of placement/incarceration

have become increasingly divorced from the actual level of criminal (or criminalized)

behavior—particularly for girls. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

Prevention's (OJJDP) Girls Working Group concluded a 2008 report on girls'

violence by stating that, after a thorough review of the data,

> [a]vailable evidence strongly suggests that girls are, over time, being arrested
> more frequently for simple assaults, despite evidence from longitudinal self-report
> and victimization surveys that they are not actually more violent.[92]

Representation, Voice, and Ethnographic Reflexivity

Understanding the complex causes driving the criminalization of girls' behaviors and

their increasing contact with the criminal justice system, I argue, requires a method

more nuanced and girl-centered than quantitative sociology. I approach this task with

no small amount of trepidation, however. In the preface to his seminal work on

sharecroppers during the Great Depression, James Agee demonstrates considerable

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[90]Chesney-Lind and Irwin, *Beyond Bad Girls: Gender, Violence, and Hype.* 26, 27.
[91] Hilary Russ, "The War on Catfights," *City Limits Magazine*, January 15 2004.1-2.
Accessed 12 August 2007,
<http://www.citylimits.org/content/articles/viewarticle.cfm?article_id=3024>.
[92] Zahn et al., "Violence by Teenage Girls: Trends and Context." 16.

discomfort with the act of writing about his subjects. In so doing, he anticipates two of the ongoing dialogues that have animated anthropology since the late 1980s—the role of the researcher in the process of observing and recording the subject and the presence of the scholarly hand in interpreting and writing. Agee's point is well taken; the final product of such research can easily eclipse "the enormity," in all senses, of attempts to bring the lived realities of actual people into being in written form.

Moreover, the difficulty of telling the story of another is one of numerous ethical dilemmas that arise when working with young people. Court-involved youth are already subject to considerable assessment and surveillance. In New York City, Family Court-involved youth are assessed by the Department of Probation upon arrest. Young people are interviewed by lawyers and Judges, and are frequently ordered to undergo psychological or psychiatric assessments conducted by Family Court Mental Health Services. The information shared by youth and their parents in these assessments is released to lawyers and the presiding Judge. In Criminal Court, youth are also assessed briefly by the New York City Criminal Justice Agency (CJA), with the goal of helping arraignment judges "make more informed decisions" about whether a defendant should be released or detained.[93] Defendants are likewise interviewed by their lawyers. Those young people offered programming as an alternative method of resolving their case, both in Family and Criminal Court, are assessed by potentially numerous treatment or ATI program staff. In the event they are sentenced to programs or facilities, they are assessed numerous additional times to determine their eligibility for, and the appropriate treatment modality of, mental

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[93] http://www.nycja.org/

health services, drug or alcohol treatment, vocational, educational and a plethora of other social services. When these young people return to court for compliance hearings, judges require information about school or employment, behavior at home, and compliance with mandates, particularly for youth involved in alternative-to-detention or -incarceration programs.

Relative to the young women with whom I conducted my research, I was undoubtedly in a position of power along numerous axes, not limited to age, race, class, cultural capital, and, in many cases, sexual orientation and gender performance. Moreover, I was encountering these young women within an already coercive context. Adults have considerably more power in society than do youth. I was a heterosexual, married, well-educated, middle-class, white woman in my late twenties at the time I conducted my research, aware that race, class, and gender would likely further align me in participants' minds with either the court process or, more generally, the systems of surveillance that surround them. During initial conversations with girls, where I presented the project and explained its intent, girls had mixed reactions. Not confrontational, several in each group certainly pushed back at me a little, with very direct questions about my motives: "Miss, why you doing this?" and "You getting paid for this?" Being teenagers, however, these same girls often took the opportunity of a relatively loose forum to lob veiled insults at one another rather than at me (allusions to other girls being willing to participate, for instance, given their histories of prostitution). Others, merely wanting to avoid this kind of negative attention, kept their heads down, picking at their nails or adjusting their clothing, and maintained an insistent neutrality. Each of the four times I made

this presentation of the project, however, there were several girls that voiced their interest, interpreting my project as, in the words of one young woman, "You want to know our stressors so you could help us." The program's coordinator assisted greatly in collecting consents from willing girls and, depending on girls' ages, their guardians. Her assistance conferred on me, and the project as a whole, an authority and a specific kind of credibility, albeit one that implicitly aligned me with the program and the court. No young woman was mandated to participate; all self-selected and agreed to participate. Additionally, all were repeatedly reminded that they need not discuss anything that they were uncomfortable with or that they did not want to be made semi-public knowledge through inclusion in this project. Indeed, it was the promise of the inclusion of their stories in a book that was initially appealing to many of them; many, in fact, wanted me to use their real names, and I had to consistently remind them of the potential collateral consequences of such a decision. They were told verbally and in writing that their participation in this project could neither hurt nor help their relationship with the STARS program.

The fact remains, however, that these young women were participating in programming in lieu of going into placement or prison. I knew that whatever claims I made to the contrary, particularly since I was working in a sense under the aegis of the STARS program, they might still feel obligated to participate. I attempted to design my research protocol in such a way that this power differential was acknowledged explicitly and often—and, to the degree possible, countered. I needed a research method that placed young women at the center. I drew on feminist, particularly material feminist and standpoint theorist, research and analytical methods

to design a protocol for individual and group interviews that intentionally positioned

the young women as collaborators and active participants in the process of meaning-

making and framing the conversation. Irma McClaurin, in defining her approach to

Black feminist anthropology, argues for:

> …[a] research paradigm that decolonizes and transforms—in other words, one
> that seeks to alleviate conditions of oppression through scholarship and activism
> rather than support them. To do so means directly confronting the way in which
> our identities (always informed by race, class, and gender) are implicated in the
> research process and in the very way we relate to the discipline of anthropology.[94]

I never would and never could claim to have conducted Black feminist ethnography.

There is a lengthy and disturbing history of white scholars co-opting the innovative

theories and methods of scholars of color, only to get considerably more attention for

them than the originators.[95] Still, as a white woman working with Black and Latina

female informants, particularly given my desire to privilege their experiences and

voices, necessitates recognizing the intellectual debt I owe Black feminist scholarship

generally, and Black feminist anthropology more specifically. The history of

marginalization of Black women's scholarship, as Henrietta L. Moore has argued,

"forces us to reformulate the privileging of the woman ethnographer with regard to

the women she studies, and to acknowledge that the power relations in the

ethnographic encounter are not necessarily ones which are erased simply by

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[94] Irma McClaurin, "Theorizing a Black Feminist Self in Anthropology: Toward an
Autoethnographic Approach," in *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics,
Praxis, and Poetics*, ed. Irma McClaurin (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University
Press, 2001). 57.

[95] See, for instance, "Culture to Culture: Ethnography and Cultural Studies as Critical
Intervention," in bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston:
South End Press, 1990).

commonalities of sex"—nor, I would add, by other shared aspects of social location, including race, class, sexuality, geography, etc.[96]

Though I had worked with young people, including young people of color and court-involved youth, for more than 10 years, I was initially somewhat apprehensive about conducting this research. I combed through urban, youth, and "street" ethnographies for detailed accounts of forging relationships with subjects and, disappointingly, found few concrete suggestions. My experiences working with young people led me to believe that anything smacking of inauthenticity would be met with suspicion and—frankly—derision. After weighing concerns about resistance and unwillingness among the girls to participate, I finally decided to approach these girls as I do work with all young people: I would be open, non-judgmental, and relaxed. I would not push too hard at the beginning and let our relationship evolve over time, as we gained more exposure to one another. I attempted at all times to be responsive and respectful, answering their questions and responding to their natural curiosity about my presence as truthfully as possible. When, during my presentations of the project, they asked the sometimes uncomfortable questions about my motives, rather than shying away from the truth or trying to assume a posture of coolness, I instead tried to be transparent about myself and my own motivations as I could: "I'm here to learn about what life is like for young women involved in the court system," I would tell them, "so that we can try to

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[96] Henrietta L. Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). 9. Qtd. Kimberly Eison Simmons, "A Passion for Sameness: Encountering a Black Feminist Self in Fieldwork in the Dominican Republic," in *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics*, ed. Irma McClaurin (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

make things better. I want to let people who make decisions—politicians, policy makers, professors, researchers—know what you think and how you feel about the things you experience in the day to day. The more honest you are with me, the more accurate I can be in telling the stories of your lives."

Initially, even some of the girls who elected to participate in the research were quiet or reserved. Once they understood the nature of the discussion—and saw that I was listening to them and wanted to respect their comments and perspectives—most were eager to participate. I was told on more than one occasion that my informants felt better after interview sessions because it just "felt nice to talk." While I would like to flatter myself that this expressed sense of enjoyment and connection was the result of some exciting quality of mine, I think the primary contributor was simply creating a space where they were heard and could be open about their experiences and beliefs. Are teenagers rebellious? Yes. Do they question authority? Yes. Yet, I am often surprised by the common assumption that some sort of gimmick must be employed for an adult to get a teenager to talk to her. Indeed, a colleague recently asked me, "Do you know about sports or music? You must. I have a theory that everyone who works with kids needs to know about one or the other in order to connect to them." By contrast, the things I have found necessary in working with teenagers, particularly court-involved youth, are the willingness to be open, to engage honestly, to be uncompromisingly honest about my intentions, and recognize and respect the authority they possess in locating the meaningful moments and animating forces in their lives.

Over the course of the two years during which I conducted my research, I inevitably developed relationships with the young women. With some, I grew close enough that I have kept in contact with them even after my research was completed. My efforts to create a space of community and safety, for conversations structured and facilitated by me but really led by the girls themselves, ultimately resulted a group dynamic where the norm was a relative amount of openness and forthrightness. Many told me the process of sharing their life experiences in this way was "therapeutic," and made them really think about the connections between their behavior and their "pasts."

Tamar El-Or has argued that the creation of trust and a sense of intimacy between researcher and informant can negatively impact the research aspect of the relationship.

> Intimacy […] offers a cozy environment for the ethnographic journey, but at the same time an illusive one. The ethnographer wants information, this information happens to be someone else's real life. The informant's willingness to cooperate with the ethnographer might arise from different motivations, but it usually ends when the informant feels he/she has become an object for someone else's interests. So it seems that intimacy and working relationships (if not under force or fallacy) go in opposite directions.[97]

The act of inquiry—for all its trappings of intimacy and collaboration—is inherently invasive. However, I disagree with El-Or's claim that intimacy leads to the demise of an ethnographic encounter. In fact, where young people are concerned, intimacy and working relationships were instead all-too-dangerous partners. Young informants— at least those with whom I have worked—clearly enjoy being the center of attention. They like having adults listen to them and respect them as holders of insurgent

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[97] Qtd in Nancy A. Naples, *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research* (New York: Routledge, 2003). 40.

knowledge. Despite my substantial efforts to keep them from discussing their cases, for instance, they all wanted to go into detail about the crime(s) they were charged with, the difficulties surrounding the case, and pressures involved. By creating an atmosphere of respect, and by recognizing them as the authorities on their lives, I found that they wanted to share, and often appeared eager for the opportunity to create their own narratives of, their life experiences.

Ultimately, forming relationships of care and intimacy emerged as a more vexed area than potential resistance. I was concerned throughout that I not be perceived as a social worker or case manager—namely, someone with any power to affect the trajectory of their participation in the STARS program, their court reports, or their cases or with any specialized training in counseling—and reminded the girls of this distinction more than once, wanting to be sure they understood the purpose of my presence and what kind of listening I was "qualified" to provide. This became a practical rather than theoretical issue on several occasions, where the young women would confide histories of abuse or suicidality. In all instances, I offered to connect them with the program's social worker if they had been, in the parlance of social work, "triggered" by our conversation. To be sure, while some of the sessions did involve girls recounting troubling events in their lives or communities, sessions also intentionally focused on exploring strengths within their social networks and environments, and many sessions were largely positive—even downright funny—in tone.

While the stakes were high in relation to the girls not being coerced into participation by staff or myself, in a certain sense the power dynamics inherent to any

form of ethnographic communication were foregrounded by the location and purpose of the STARS program. The context of a program that requires staff—potential confidantes—to create court reports makes the development of a trusting relationship complicated for all involved. Jessie, a 19-year-old participant, explained her approach to information-sharing thusly: "I thought [the STARS program coordinator] was cool. Like, I thought she wasn't gonna say nothing. But then she has to do her job. That's why I'm not getting too close to [her]. Yeah, I've been successful because she's my case manager. I just don't get too close to her. There's certain things in my—let's just say I don't get too close to her." She made a distinction between the program coordinator, and me. "There's things about me you know that [she] doesn't even know." Jessie understood that I was interviewing her for a school project that might turn into a book, or something else in print. She was willing to convey certain kinds of personal information to me that she felt uncomfortable telling the STARS program coordinator. Jessie, like the other STARS participants, clearly made strategic decisions about what information she decided to share with whom, given the context of the structural pressures on us all. This is not to say that girls never entered guardedly into conversation with me, or even directly lied. Certainly, they did. Girls prevaricated, shaded in and out of the truth, and withheld information. Rather than perceiving this as problematic, a stumbling block to the goal of eliciting the one concrete truth that girls might choose to disclose or not to disclose (that is, either they "lied" or they "told the truth"), I suggest that girls were instead demonstrating a selective presentation of self. Given the context in which we met, this selectivity was a very reasonable strategy of self-preservation and –protection.

The inescapability of being constantly aware of whom one is interacting with, of

weighing the potential consequences of self-disclosure and –presentation, and

adjusting accordingly recalls vividly W.E.B. Du Bois' famous observation of double-

consciousness:

> the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight
> in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness,
> but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a
> peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at
> one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a
> world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.[98]

Since Du Bois first articulated this sense of duality and multifaceted identity, many

scholars have offered their own revisions and reframing of this tension between how

one perceives oneself and how one is perceived by others and the impact of that

tension on consciousness itself.[99] In addition to suggesting an alternative way to

frame girls' self-disclosure—i.e. as intentional "shifting" born of an awareness of the

surveillant and assessing context that surrounds them—keeping in mind the concept

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[98] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin, 1989). 5.
[99] This concept has been one of dominant analytics, in various incarnations and permutations, of scholarship by and about African Americans, African American women, and by (often female) scholars of color more broadly. See, for instance, Frances M. Beal, "Double-Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology."; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Theresa A. Martinez, "The Double-Consciousness of Du Bois & the 'Mestiza Consciousness' of Anzaldúa," *Race, Gender & Class* 9, no. 4 (2002). For an explicit connection between the concepts of double-consciousness and double-binds, see Sandra Adell, *Double-Consciousness/Double Bind: Theoretical Issues in Twentieth-Century Black Literature* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

of double-consciousness and girls' strategic disclosure gestures toward the existence of a counter discourse operating for these young women.

Representing this counter-discourse is no easy matter. On the surface, integrating the voices of court-involved girls into academic and policy conversations would seem to be a straightforward corrective and has, in fact, been a hallmark of what might be termed Prison Studies since its birth in the work of Michel Foucault.[100] "When the prisoners began to speak," Foucault famously suggested to Gilles Deleuze in their dialogue from 1972, "they possessed an individual theory of prisons, the penal system, and justice. It is this form of discourse which ultimately matters, a discourse against power, the counter-discourse of prisoners and those we call delinquents – and not a theory about delinquency."[101] Yet this position of Foucault's has been famously answered by Gayatri Spivak's essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", a sustained critique of this conversation with Deleuze and, most specifically, their Euro-centric argument that "intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society's other."[102] The subaltern position, Spivak argues, is inherently

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[100] I use "Prison Studies" here to refer to the body of literature that critically examines the social, cultural, and economic relationships of prison to the larger social body and the consolidation and exercise of power. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1977). This text, particularly the argument that recent violent spectacle has been replaced by surveillance and other technologies of control was challenged by James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, & Race in U.S. Culture*. As previously noted, Angela Y. Davis, Mike Davis, and Ruth Wilson Gilmore reinvigorated the critical prison studies conversation in the U.S. in the mid-1990s.
[101] Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980). 209
[102] Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Carey Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

articulated by the dominant and, at the very least, the privileged position of the scholar must be acknowledged. [103] She suggests:

> It is not a solution, the idea of the disenfranchised speaking for themselves, or the radical critics speaking for them; this question of representation, self-representation, representing others, is a problem. On the other hand, we cannot put it under the carpet with demands for authentic voices; we have to remind ourselves that, as we do this, we might be compounding the problem even as we are trying to solve it. And there has to be persistent critique of what one is up to.... I think as long as one remains aware that it is a very problematic field, there is some hope.[104]

The ethic of representation, and of self-reflexivity, is central to scholarship produced in this postmodern moment, particularly that intentionally working toward social justice. Scholars must balance a recognition that prisoners, former prisoners, their families, and their communities possess vital, situated knowledge of the carceral that differs from the academy's and, often, from our own. At the same time, this "discourse against power, the counter-discourse of prisoners" must find its way into scholarship if that work is to have any lasting consequence outside the academy.

There is, however, a constant tension between the specific—what Dylan Rodríguez has called the "micro"—and the general—what Rodríguez calls the "macro." Rena Fraden, in her study of Rhodessa Jones' theater-based work with incarcerated women, acknowledges the importance of placing these women's narratives at the center of intentionally activist scholarship: "that the incarcerated

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[103] Spivak's conclusion that the subaltern, ultimately, cannot speak may not be directly relevant to this discussion; her subaltern is a third-world woman and she is writing very much within and to the condition of post-coloniality. Furthermore, her notion of the term "transparency" differs from mine. For the (negative) tendency to erase the scholar from the scholarship, I will use "invisibility." By "transparency," I mean making evident the authorial process.

[104] Qtd. Adrian Howe, *Punish and Critique: Towards a Feminist Analysis of Penality* (New York: Routledge, 1994). , 212.

women's experiences have to be acknowledged, understood, related, and heard is a key principle of this feminist theatrical project."[105] To leave the matter there, however, often means that the individual story eclipses its social context, obscuring deeply-entrenched structural oppression. Julia Sudbury has argued a similar point, suggesting that the danger of a focus on women's personal narratives in the context of prison-focused work is that

> [w]omen's personal histories are then mined as rich sources for understanding [their] aberrant behavior, and childhood abuse, domestic violence, or familial dysfunction presented as the root cause. Presenting women's experiences of abuse as the cause of incarceration individualizes and personalizes their treatment at the hands of the criminal justice system. It obscures the broader social disorder signified by mass incarceration, and it sidesteps the question of why the state responds to abused women with punishment.[106]

The need for context and systemic analysis is central to the position I take in this dissertation.

Rather than attempt to devise another theory about why girls commit crimes (or, in Foucault's terms, another theory about delinquency), I'm suggesting that these theories themselves contribute to the production of delinquency. My research uncovers ethnographic support for Foucault's analysis that the criminal justice system and the academic fields that support it are part of a much larger nexus of systems they work to obscure—what he terms "the prison archipelago." This archipelago is characterized by the obsessive measuring and assessing of the subject by social science, and signals the growth around the prison of an entire disciplinary apparatus

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[105] Rena Fraden, *Imagining Medea: Rhodessa Jones and Theater for Incarcerated Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).21.
[106] Julia Sudbury, *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex* (New York: Routledge, 2005). xv.

(including criminology, psychiatry, and psychology) whose focus is not the physical body but "the soul." It is not only institutional in nature, but also cultural, to the degree that such a distinction is even still possible to make. The result of this dispersion of power and authority beyond the prison walls was (and, I argue, is) a fluid continuum of institutions, of possible offenses and punishments, and of potential authority figures and specialists by whom one might be observed and evaluated. This archipelago finds its current incarnation in the neoliberal push to identify and eliminate "patterns of offending," "criminogenic risk factors," and "anti-social behavior." This neoliberal drive toward "hard data," numbers, and evidence-based practices in fact occludes and marks as natural the effect of state violence on the lives of so-called minority groups (e.g. Blacks and Latinos, women, the poor, and the LGBTQ community). As Angela Davis posits,

> the real human beings – a vastly disproportionate number of whom are black and Latino/a men and women – designated by these numbers in a seemingly race-neutral way are deemed fetishistically exchangeable with the crimes they have or will allegedly commit. The real impact of imprisonment on their lives never need be examined.[107]

Occupying what Joy James calls "landscapes where practically no one wishes to walk," the voices of Davis' "real human beings" are not those "best amplified in or by academe or government or corporate life." This is precisely why their voices are those "most necessary for [an] intellectual and political project" that seeks to expose the violence and the logic-of-violence double-bind.[108]

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[107] Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* 267.
[108] For more on the promise—and dangers—of the "elevating dismissed voices" of the incarcerated, see James, *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy*. xi-xvii.

The constant surveillance and assessment that occurs both inside and outside the prison is especially troubling to the degree that its omni-presence effectively naturalizes its own existence and authority and contributes to the continued production of delinquency.[109] This was evident in the lives of the girls with whom I worked. Because girls are constantly being assessed, monitored, and reported on, behaviors that would, under other circumstances be considered normal, become further evidence of their criminality and deviance. Cutting classes at school, for instance, indicates delinquent tendencies; fighting with another group of girls is evidence of maladaptation and a tendency toward violence that indicates future risk to the public.

Building on the concept of the prison archipelago, Dylan Rodríguez suggests that this nexus of systems might be profitably termed "the prison regime." According to his formulation, the term

> exceeds the analytical scope of prison management, prison policy, and 'the prison (prisoner's) experience,' categories that most often take textual form through discrete case studies, institutional reform initiatives, prisons/prisoner ethnographies, and individualized biographical and autobiographical narratives. Rather, my working conception of the prison regime invokes a 'meso' dimension of processes, structures, and vernaculars that compose the state's modalities of self-articulation and 'rule' across these macro and micro scales.[110]

For Rodríguez, the micro level of analysis, typified by traditional prison ethnography, and the macro level of analysis, typified by analysis of "the prison system" or the "prison industrial complex," fail to account for the specific ways state power is exercised and generated. It is precisely these "processes, structures, and vernaculars"

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[109] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.
[110] Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime*. 41.

that reinforce and rearticulate the prison as the "localization and constitutive logic" of state power.

Finally, while Davis focuses on the importance of making visible the incarcerated, in light of Rodriguez's quasi-Foucauldian articulation of the prison regime's operation through neoliberal ideological commitments and state violence, I suggest it is equally essential to bring to light the experiences of those who are invisible *outside* prisons, for whom and on whom the prison-industrial complex nonetheless has massive consequences. And so, in addition to providing a space where young women's experiences and perspectives are privileged, the analysis that follows unearths from girls' personal narratives a grounded critical analysis of the system that has created the conditions that, in part, shape their experiences. This girl-centered approach discloses the inherent discord between their life experiences and the neoliberal ideological commitments that have come to govern public policy discussion and social discourse of the last fifty years, and the ways in which these girls see themselves as always already enmeshed in overlapping and competing systems of families, communities, and government institutions. Moreover, it traces the way this discord expresses itself in double-binds.

Chapter Three
Locating Home

All my life I have searched for a place of belonging, a place that would become home. Growing up in a small Kentucky town, I knew in early childhood what home was, what it felt like. Home was the safe place, the place where one could count on not being hurt. It was the place where wounds were attended to. Home was the place where the me of me mattered.

-bell hooks[111]

And I did it with my mouth shut. I haven't said nothing. But I—it—it got to the point where I can't take it no more.

-Maribel, 18

The day I sat down with Maribel to conduct our first individual interview was much

like any other at the STARS program. It was a dreary Friday afternoon in early May,

rainy and unusually chilly. There were seven girls in attendance that day, some

participating in groups elsewhere in the building, others sitting in the STARS

program room listening to music or looking at their pictures and profiles on

MySpace.[112] Seventeen-year-old Maribel and I knew each other already from group

interview sessions I was running on a weekly basis, but this was the first time we

would be meeting alone. I was a little cautious, as Maribel tended to be one of the

quieter group participants. During this session, however, she seemed barely able to

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[111] bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2008). 215.

[112] MySpace was a social networking site popular at the time I conducted my research. Since then, it has been superseded by Facebook. For more, see Chloe Albanesius, "More Americans Go To Facebook Than MySpace," http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2348822,00.asp.

contain her feelings: "I'm going through a lot of stuff at my house," she told me, before we even got into the conference room I typically used for interviews. With the fluorescent lights crackling and the air-conditioning window unit burbling noisily in the background, Maribel slipped into one of the plastic chairs around the table and put her head in her hands.

A self-described "AG" or aggressive girl, a label she explained applies to lesbian and bisexual girls who are gender non-conforming (that is, more "butch"), Maribel wore the standard large shirt and baggy pants more often sported by her male peers. Her curly hair was pulled tightly back in a low ponytail, leaving the tattoo on her neck—"music notes with the gay rainbow"—exposed. Despite adopting the label of AG, Maribel presented as anything but aggressive in the dominant cultural sense. She was soft-spoken, her speech slurred a bit by her tongue piercing. She kept all her court documents neatly organized in a Five Star folder, and would occasionally pull one out during our conversation, unprompted, to double-check information. The issue at the top of her mind, however, was her living situation. She referred to herself as "homeless." Following a physically violent altercation with her mother two years prior to her arrest, Maribel was determined by her mother to be too "out-of-control" to remain at home, and was sent to live with her grandfather. As Maribel explained to me that day, however, during the four years that she'd been living with him, her grandfather had become increasingly withdrawn emotionally, and the relationship was becoming untenable:

> But my grandfather, like he never used to help me. I had to—I had to do everything on my own. My mom called the house just the day before yesterday to tell him that I'm gonna go out with her to a party, and could he give me $20 on Saturday. And he was like, "Oh, that? She don't deserve it." And I was like—

and my mom's still on the phone, 'cause my mom's on speakerphone, and I told my grandfather—so, my mom heard everything—I told him, "How I don't deserve it when I go to school from eight to three? Then I go to the program. I've been [home] like around 8:00. And I don't even have time for myself, 'cause I have to do homework, and then from homework I take a bath and go to sleep." And he don't worry about—he don't ask me, "Oh, did I eat? Oh, did I—how did I get to the program?" He don't ask me nothing. And I got mad, and I told him, "I do deserve it, 'cause now I'm passing my classes. I don't be in the street." And I felt—and my mom—I—I broke out. I was like—'cause I've been living this. And I did it with my mouth shut. I haven't said nothing. But I—it—it got to the point where I can't take it no more, because it—now it's really getting a problem….

Maribel was enrolled in the STARS program, through which she was avoiding seven to ten years of prison for attempted murder. She was living in the basement apartment of her grandfather and step-grandmother, who, according to Maribel refused to communicate with her about anything beyond her chores or the money she owed them; they offered her virtually no emotional support during her many required court appearances and attendant appointments. Over the course of my discussions with Maribel, it became clear that when she was present at all, Maribel's mother vacillated between exercising her power over Maribel—primarily through emotional and physical abuse—and occupying a role similar to that of a peer, or friend. Despite the substantial difficulties Maribel faced, during the period I worked with her, Maribel's relationship with her mother looked much more like a peer relationship—in the passage above, inviting Maribel to go to a party, urging her to ask her grandfather for money—rather than a more traditionally parental relationship. Maribel's mother was either unable or unwilling to provide Maribel with the kind of "home" for which Maribel longed. A home that, as in bell hooks' formulation, could be a place where "one could count on not being hurt…where wounds were attended to." The absence of this kind of "home"—whether a physical space or a relational space with the adults

in their lives, where they could count on being protected and not being hurt—was a state shared by almost all the STARS program participants.

These young women, many tattooed and pierced and whose self-presentations reflected their embrace of "the street," consistently described being in very complicated familial and social relationships, and being routinely misunderstood and misinterpreted by the adults in their lives. In fact, nearly every girl who participated in this study had experienced physical or sexual abuse at home. Many, like Jessie, Anaya, and Natalia, had been victimized several times over. This chapter explores the overriding sense of vulnerability—of actual and potential victimhood—that permeated girls' descriptions of their home lives and places it within a socio-historical context of raced and gendered violence against women of color. I outline the neglect and abandonment, the physical violence, and the sexual violence girls described within their family structures. It was precisely this lack of safety within their families that led many girls to imagine or attempt to create alternative homes in the context of romantic relationships. Despite their best efforts, for the STARS participants these, too, were characterized by emotional abuse and violence.

Girls' descriptions of their home lives—both with family and intimate partners—revealed three essential discourses that they were forced to navigate: this idealized concept of "home"; a second discourse of Black and Latina womanhood and responsibility to family; and a third discourse of "street justice," respect, and loyalty—what Elijah Anderson has termed the "code of the street."[113] The ways these discourses combine creates an overarching logic-of-violence double-bind in girls'

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[113] Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*.

personal relationships; specifically, girls were repeatedly reminded of their responsibilities to family and the importance of loyalty, yet at the same time their actual lives at home were often characterized by violence and betrayal at the hands of family members. Further, girls' methods of navigating this interpersonal double-bind—creating alternative homes with romantic partners, shifting, isolating themselves, and adopting a discourse of independence—often exposed them to further violation and violence.

Family Violence

Seven of the nine girls who participated in this study disclosed a history of ongoing family violence. This violence found form in emotional abuse—whether neglect and abandonment, threats, name-calling or other kind of verbal assaults—as well as physical and sexual abuse. Though each family situation was different, almost across the board the very people girls believed were responsible for keeping them safe and protecting them—their mothers, fathers, siblings, and/or extended families—were the same people hurting them, threatening to hurt them, or betraying them by refusing to protect them. In instances where family members did protect them, this protection manifested primarily as revenge ex post facto through the exercise of violence against others, implicitly reinforcing girls' vulnerability. Often, these forms of violence overlapped. It is worth noting that, while this chapter focuses on girls' stories of violence at the hands of family members, perpetrators of family-based violence are, like the girls themselves, part of a much larger system that likewise produces them as victim and perpetrator simultaneously—a tension girls articulated explicitly. Just as I argue girls' violence should be understood as occurring within and being structured

by this larger system, the violence they experience within their families (and, as I explore in the chapters that follow, at the hands of state actors) should as well.

Emotional Violence

The concept of emotional violence might, on the surface, seem relatively minor in the context of the physical abuse some of the STARS girls had endured.[114] Girls' narratives, however, suggest that the emotional abuse they perceived in their familial relationships cut them to the quick. As the passage from bell hooks' *Belonging* that serves as this chapter's epigraph suggests, in our cultural dreamwork home is "the place where the me of me" matters. It is the place where important aspects of our personalities are reflected back to us, shaping our self-conceptions in foundational ways. Girls repeatedly described instances where the "me of me" was denied, or devalued, where they were treated as objects to be disciplined or used rather than subjects with interiority and emotional and intellectual complexity. Often, what triggered the emotional abuse was girls' assertions of their subjectivity, through subversion of expected gender roles or sexual preference, exercising sexual desire, or attempting to shift from "being in the streets" to "doing good."

When Maribel first went to live with her grandfather, for example, she described herself as "bad, constantly in the streets, fighting, cutting school, smoking weed, all that stuff." During this time, her grandfather supported her financially and

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[114] Emotional abuse includes causing fear, shame, public embarrassment, continued threats and taunts, isolation, and humiliation. For more, see Deborah Epstein and Lisa A. Goodman, "Domestic Violence Victims' Experiences in the Legal System," in *Stress, Trauma, and Wellbeing in the Legal System*, ed. Monica K. Miller and Brian J. Bornstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*.

emotionally. But Maribel said that once she started working on fulfilling the mandates of the STARS program, he withdrew both his emotional and monetary support.

> Now that I'm doing what I have to do, he's not helping me at all. He's not even caring, 'cause I told him, "Oh, I graduated from job training." And I was really happy and stuff, cause it was my first job training. And he—he didn't even say nothing. He was acting like nothing.

Maribel experienced her grandfather's apathetic response as his rejection of those things that made her proud, things she interpreted as a significant milestone in her life. Instead of supporting her, or applauding her hard work, he grew emotionally withdrawn and controlling of her behavior. By the time we conducted our interview, she explained,

> he will say, "Oh, I don't have money," or "You don't deserve it," or something like that. I'm like, "How I don't deserve it when I don't even have time for myself?" I barely even be in the house, because I be everywhere. I be at school, and here. And I—and my mom—I can't use the house phone. I can't use the computer. I can't use nothing there. I'm basically there to sleep, take a bath, and that's it.

The more Maribel complied with the mandates of the STARS program, and the more successful she was in meeting the program's standards, the more isolated she felt she was becoming at home. The result was an almost inverse relationship between Maribel's home life and the life of the program.

Seventeen-year-old Natalia's relationship with her mother had punitive overtones that mirrored those in Maribel and her grandfather's relationship. Natalia described having to wedge her door shut with a chair at times to keep her enraged mother out of her room. She detailed a history of intermittent financial support, reporting that she always had to pay for things herself, and that she'd always worked

"whether off the books or not." "Nobody's ever gonna know my mom like I know her," Natalia told me, invoking, and then subverting, the possibility of hooks' "me of me." "I have to deal with all her hostility and being accused for stupidness, being called a drug addict, a slut, not knowing who my baby's father is." Natalia admitted to a history of marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine use. In fact, she told me that she had been pregnant once before, but believes she miscarried after a weekend of "partying" with a male friend, which she said involved lots of cocaine and sex. While little work has been done exploring the different ways adolescent girls in particular are socialized, in her classic study, Jeanne Humphrey Block suggests that parents "oversocialize" their daughters, encouraging girls to "(over)control impulses, to be tractable, obedient, cautious, and self-sacrificing."[115] This parental expectation of girls to control their impulses is particularly pronounced around sexual impulses, and for women of color assumes even more complicated contours.[116] Natalia's

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[115] Jeanne Humphrey Block, *Sex Role Identity and Ego Development* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984). 140. See also M G Durham, "Dilemmas of Desire: Representations of Adolescent Sexuality in Two Teen Magazines," *Youth and Society* 29(1998); S Lamb, "Not With My Daughter: Parents Still Have Trouble Acknowledging Teenage Sexuality," *Psychotherapy Networker* 27, no. 3 (2003).

[116] As Nikki Jones suggests, "Hip-hop images of women—bitches and hos, gold diggers, hoodrats, ghetto chicks, ride-or-die bitches, as they are called in a number of popular rap songs—exploit traditional understandings about women's place while also reinforcing racialized ideas about Black women, girls, boys, and men, and their relationship to one another." Girls, she suggests, must navigate images of Black (and, I suggest, Latina) femininity that casts "appropriate feminine" behavior as not "loud, aggressive, rude or pushy," exercises "an appropriate level of deference toward the men in their lives," and remains "sexually conservative, heterosexual, and not a freak or a ho." I suggest that this discourse compounds the older, already existing discourse of punishment of aberrant female sexuality detailed by Mary Odem. See Jones, *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence.* 49. Also T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women* (New York: New York University Press, 2008). Mary E. Odem,

behavior—from her drug use to her candidness about her own sexual activity—subverts these traditional gender expectations for girls. Her second pregnancy—which went to term—was an announcement of this gender-role subversion and a constant, physical reminder of her sexual behavior. As such, it elicited punishment from both her parents. Despite identifying strongly with her father and being a self-described "daddy's girl," Natalia, who described herself as bisexual, also faced shaming from her father after he found out she was pregnant. She reports that he yelled at her, "You should have just stood with fucking girls." His comment reflects what Natalia interpreted as his disproval of her sexual identity, simultaneously belittling her sexual relationships with women and men.

This dynamic—shaming girls for their assertion of subjectivity and the subversion of gender-role expectations—appeared again in her father's reaction to Natalia's and her sister's MySpace pages. Drawing a distinction between herself and her sister, Natalia explained that their gender performances are evident even in their internet presences. While her sister's MySpace page was "sexy," Natalia described her own as "goofy." When her father saw her sister's profile,

> he made her delete her page. She made another one and she has this picture with her tongue out. And my father hates that shit. And he saw her checking her page and was like, "Oh, is that MySpace? You're on MySpace and you didn't add me? You add me right now. And change that picture! Change that fucking picture." And she was like, "Natalia has a picture her with her tongue out." "It ain't like that. Your sister's goofy!" I'm the funny one more towards the guy's point of view than the girl's. I'm not girly like that. My sister has all these pictures with her in tight pants, her boobs out, all that. Real, real bad.

In this instance, Natalia's lack of overt sexuality shielded her from the shaming her

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Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

father exerted on her sister. That Natalia herself deemed the exposure of "boobs" and donning of tight pants "real, real bad" reveals the extent to which she herself has internalized these messages.

Girls were punished in differing ways both for being homo- and heterosexual beings—that is, for simply expressing their sexual identities at all. Nicole, a 17-year-old self-described AG from Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, had short-cropped hair and short nails and wore baggy clothes and no make-up. She had elaborate forearm and hand tattoos like many of her court-involved male counterparts. Hers, however, were bisected by a series of angry, horizontal scars, reminders of a suicide attempt from the summer before. She described a fight she had recently gotten into with her brother over her gender presentation. One day, while they were arguing, Nicole "stepped" to her brother (that is, she became aggressive and physically confrontational). "'Oh, you want to be a big man?' That's what my brother said to me. He said, 'You wanna be a man?' I was like, 'No.' He started washing me up. I'm like, 'Oh, my God.'" Where Natalia's violations of gender and sexuality norms resulted in verbal attacks, Nicole's led to her being physically assaulted (or "washed up") by her brother, who gave her two black eyes during this incident.

In the most extreme scenarios of emotional abuse, neglect, or abandonment, girls were directly confronted with parents' or caretakers' explicit rejection of the "me of me" when girls' parents or caretakers variously kicked girls out of their homes, disowned girls, or were so drug- or alcohol-addicted or traumatized that they had almost completely dissociated from external reality. Seventeen-year-old Amber grew

up in Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood, watching her mother abused by a series of boyfriends. Finally, one beating was so severe that Amber called the police. Her mother kicked Amber and her sisters out—"chose her man over us"—and the girls eventually moved in with their maternal grandmother. Amber's grandmother had passed away shortly before she was arrested and sentenced to the STARS program, however, and she and her sisters then moved in with their great-grandmother. Amber, a third self-described AG, learned that her grandmother wanted her out of the house because of both her legal troubles and her sexual identity. Amber worried that she would soon be homeless. Like Maribel, even though she had relatives, her feelings of rejection and isolation resulted in her adopting the designation of homeless.

On the other hand, sometimes these experiences of rejection and isolation were the result of parents or caretakers trying their best, within very difficult circumstances. In one of the program's Open Mic sessions, Michelle, 20, started talking about her birth mother, whom she described as "an addict and a prostitute," and her dad, whom she doesn't know, and who was her mother's pimp. When Michelle was born, her mother "walked out and left her." She was adopted at two years old by the foster couple who had raised her starting at six months of age. Michelle saw her mother for the first time a few years before Michelle was arrested: "She was really fly with Gucci and Prada and was beautiful." Soon thereafter, while in a drug treatment program, her mother met a drug dealer, who became her boyfriend. By the next year, when Michelle saw her mom again, her hair was gone and her teeth were "all messed up." Recently, she said, she went to her mother's

neighborhood to try to find her. After trying a few different places, Michelle finally found her—in a crackhouse, exchanging sex for drugs. Michelle explained that she "tried to drag her out," but her mom didn't recognize her. Her mom thought Michelle was a probation officer checking up on her, even though she had been out of jail and off probation for years. Michelle successfully extricated her mother from the house, taking her outside to the street, and tried to take her home. But her mother refused to go because she no longer recognized Michelle. When Michelle's mom asked her if she had any money, Michelle asked her what she wanted it for, and her mom replied that she needed it "for food." Michelle asked if she had any kids she needed the money for, and her mom said, "No, it's just me out here." At this point in Michelle's story, 18-year-old Malika interrupted, wanting to know if Michelle identified herself to her mom. "No," Michelle answered, "I didn't want to break down. This shit's really hard on me. There was junkies all around and they might jump us if they saw we was weak." Malika looked at the floor, and said quietly, "Damn. You don't look like you been through all that." Stephanie—who at that point was the program's most successful participant, and at 18 had a relatively stable family supporting her through the court process—replied, "Yeah, I been through a lot, too. People think just 'cause you're smiling you're fine. But you still gotta get up in the morning."

Both Michelle's response and Stephanie's reaction were examples of shifting in action. Michelle's mother, in unknowingly denying her existence, rejected Michelle's subjecthood; asking her for money turned their relationship transactional, signaling instead Michelle's objectification. This placed Michelle in a double-bind. She could not acknowledge the emotional violence she was experiencing through her

mother's denial of her without placing them both in physical danger. Her reaction was to strategically shift, to mask her feelings of rejection and desire to make herself known to her mother in order to preserve her physical safety. Stephanie, meanwhile, recognized this approach as strategic shifting. Her reaction suggests denying emotional pain and "performing" happiness or acquiescence by "smiling" was one of the ways girls exercised their own agency in double-bind situations.

Physical Violence

As Nicole's experience with her brother suggests, girls' experiences of violence often move fluidly between the emotional and the physical. Girls described physical altercations with parents, grandparents, other kinship caretakers, and siblings. While some of these altercations arose over mundane issues (e.g. clothing, domestic responsibilities, etc.), they still escalated quickly, achieving resolution through the use of weapons, physical assault, and attempted suicide. Indeed, almost all the girls who reported any violence at home described being hit or assaulted by parents or caretakers as a way of resolving interpersonal disputes. Natalia's mother would hit her, and vice versa, when their disagreements reached a sufficient level of intensity. Alyssa, 15, revealed that she "caught [her] first case" (that is, first encountered the criminal justice system) as a result of fighting with her father. She explained that he was physically violent with her whole family. After she confronted him about his behavior, they essentially stopped communicating entirely, increasing her isolation within her family. Jessie, 18, described a long history of being hit by her mother, and similarly imagined a confrontation or some way to discharge her anger, as evidenced

by this imaginary conversation between them:

> I should hit you too for all the things you've done. Too bad I'm grown—you can't hit me no more. 'I can hit you whenever I want; I'm your mother.' So, hit me. If it helps you feel better end of the day, I don't care. …. She gets mad sometimes. But it's like, when you get mad sometimes you're gonna hit me? You think you can hit me and it makes you feel better? I don't care. I hate it.

This logic of violence as a way to resolve conflict extended to the ways girls interacted with their siblings. Natalia described an incident between herself and her sister that had happened the previous week, when Natalia wore her sister's shoes without permission. "She told me to take them off—sounding mad spoiled. We hit each other. It was stupid." While many of these incidents are relatively commonplace in origin, they often have very serious consequences. After a disagreement with her brother, for instance, Jessie explained that she "tried to stab him with a knife. After we fought, I drove him to the point where he tried to hang hisself. […] I can antagonize him through my words and stuff. I just antagonize him. So, it's just like, I'll just bring up stuff from the past."

Girls' experiences of violence and abuse prime them to respond to perceived interpersonal threats with violence. Jessie's violent and antagonistic approaches to interacting with her brother mirror experiences she had with her mother, and became the regular pattern she came to rely on in difficult situations. When threatened, she explained, she automatically responds with violence. Likewise, Maribel interpreted her own occasional use of force against her mother as a reaction to her mother's own physically aggressive behavior:

> 'Cause with my mom I would just, like, she would get mad because I would go to a school dance, or if I fail, like, a couple of classes she would get mad. And then, you know, my mom, before she would have anger problems, and one time she choked me, like, 'cause she found out I kissed a boy in eighth grade, and she was

like literally choking me and that's when I hit her. And then, because of that incident, I got shipped to my grandfather's house. But it wasn't, like I, 'cause I told her, you know, that I was sad. I didn't mean to do that at all. I just, like, I couldn't breathe at that moment, so I was hitting her arm, so she could get off of me.

Maribel's description of the incident that led to her four-year separation from her mother and siblings is revealing, and an example of the logic-of-violence double-bind in action. Maribel's mother, in this passage, uses physical violence to punish Maribel for her assertion of subjectivity (kissing a boy). This indication of sexual desire and behavior—a violation of acceptable female gender roles—results in physical punishment when Maribel's mother starts to choke her. When Maribel responds to this violence with her own violence, she is further punished as "out of control" and exiled from her immediate family home.

While girls' narratives suggest they do regularly resort to violence, they were often deeply ambivalent about doing so, particularly against family members. Jessie, for instance, was hesitant to hit her mother despite the physical violence she has endured; Natalia thought her fight with her sister is "stupid"; and Maribel explicitly states her remorse and her sense that she had no other options. Some of this hesitance comes from the fact that parents or caretakers sometimes employ physical violence as a disciplinary measure.[117] Describing her adopted father, Michelle said, shaking her

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[117] Ignorance around differing cultural disciplinary practices compounds Moynihan-era discourses of pathology to inform the racist, classist, sexist—and disproportionate—institutional administration and movement of Black and Latino children by and into the child welfare system. This discussion of violence should by no means to be taken as implicit support of this process, which works alongside the juvenile and criminal justice system to pathologize African-American and Latino families, particularly those that are low-income. For more on this, see Dorothy Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003).

head, "my father beat my butt. He used to play baseball in Puerto Rico and he had heavy hands." Malika added, laughing, "my grandmother had a lot of paddles. When I went to her house I'd always hide them and there she was, coming out with new paddles!" Malika and Michelle recounted their experiences during a discussion of abuse. While the incidents they describe—particularly Malika's—are seemingly in line with some cultural discourses and accepted behavior around discipline, the fact that the girls introduced these incidents in the context of a conversation explicitly about abuse suggests that girls see a blurred line between the two.

Violence administered "for your own good" is one of the most common manifestations of the logic-of-violence double-bind that girls experienced within their families. The message—essentially "I'm doing this to keep you safe"—is the precise opposite of its context, or meta-message—"You are not safe, because I am hurting you." Natalia, Jessie, Maribel, Michelle, Malika, and Alyssa were all directly punished, first as a way to "keep them safe" and then, in the case of Maribel and Alyssa, in continued ways for acknowledging the context of that initial message.

Sexual Violence

Girls also reported significant levels of sexual abuse from biological and elected family members, experiences that profoundly shaped their feelings of safety in several, and, importantly gendered, ways. Girls repeatedly and consistently expressed expectations that their mothers be on their sides, particularly providing nurture and support upon the disclosure of abuse. But girls' narratives suggest their mothers—for

complicated reasons of their own—often failed to meet these expectations. Girls felt

this subversion acutely:

> Jessie: [H]alf the time you be like, "Oh ma, this happened…" And she be like, "Woman, art thou loose?"

> Nicole: I hate when that happen. Like … you tell your mother, "This nigga tried to touch me. I'm scared to go to sleep at night." And she don't believe me! I don't understand how a mother can find out something like that happening to they daughter and not want to do something.

Mothers' lack of support or protection was a serious betrayal, an important iteration

of emotional violence girls experienced. This sense of betrayal is clear in Jessie's

example as the literal blaming of the victim, and in Nicole's as an intentional refusal

to acknowledge that the abuse occurred. Another example of the logic-of-violence

double-bind, here the implicit relationship girls assume with their mothers, "I'm here

to keep you safe," is juxtaposed against the meta-message—in the first instance, "It's

your fault" and, in the second, "You're lying." This response among caretakers is

fairly commonplace, though no less destructive because of that.[118]

Family members' denial, blaming of the girls for their own victimization, and

lack of support and care represents one kind of emotional or psychic violence girls

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[118] As Judith Herman writes of this phenomenon, "the survivor's feelings of fear, distrust, and isolation may be compounded by the incomprehension of frank hostility of those to whom she turns for help." 64. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). There has been relatively little research done on the effects of disclosure of past sexual abuse to family. See also Courtney E. Ahrens and Erendira Aldana, "The Ties That Bind: Understanding the Impact of Sexual Assault Disclosure on Survivors' Relationships with Friends, Family, and Partners," *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 13, no. 2 (2012); Gloria J. Romero et al., "The Prevalence and Circumstances of Child Sexual Abuse Among Latina Women," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 21(1999). And T.S. Foley, "Family Response to Rape and Sexual Assault," in *Rape and Sexual Assault: A Research Handbook*, ed. Ann W. Burgess (New York: Garland, 1985).

experienced as a corollary to the actual sexual assault. A second, physical

corollary— "street justice"—comes at the hands of their male family members.[119]

One of the reasons Natalia reported feeling so close to her father, for instance, was

that he performed both the nurturing response expected of mothers *and* the vengeful

response expected of fathers or other male family members. When she told him

about being repeatedly sexually abused by a babysitter between the ages of nine and

10 years old, he not only believed her but was visibly upset: "Since then I could never

say anything bad about my dad, because he cried." The centrality of her father's

reaction to her narrative of her experience, and its impact on their relationship,

reveals how permanently-meaningful his emotional vulnerability and nurture are to

Natalia, especially when it involves his stepping outside the stereotypical gender

reaction and revealing the "him of him."

Natalia's abuser was a 15-year-old boy who was like a son to her father, she

explained, and so was over at their house a lot. He started touching her when she was

nine, and soon thereafter she started locking her bedroom door. This boy picked her

lock. Eventually, her father chased him out of the house and beat him with a monkey

wrench. Natalia reported that the abuse was a traumatic experience for her. "For a

long time I was nervous around guys, and I can never hear his name. My brothers

used to tease me by saying his name." Though Natalia's father ultimately sought to

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[119] I draw this term from Elijah Anderson, who explains street justice thusly: "In
many working-class and impoverished black communities today, particularly as faith
in the criminal justice system erodes, […] feeling they cannot depend on the police
and other civil authorities to protect them from danger, residents often take personal
responsibility for their security. They may yield, but often they are prepared to let
others know in no uncertain terms that there will be dire consequences if they are
violated." Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the
Inner City*. 109.

end the abuse by exacting revenge on her abuser, her exposure to a different kind of violence continued in the "teasing" she was forced to endure (and which required her to "smile").

Anaya, in our first group interview, described being abused by her cousin, abuse that other male family members answered with violent retribution. In the following exchange, both Anaya's and Nicole's expectations of care and safe-keeping, as well as the violent nature of that care, are evident:

Anaya: When you hear it happens to people, it's mainly people in they family. It's rough. Like, for me it was my cousin, and like, I hate seeing his face to this day. But we grew up together, so what else can I do? You know?

Nicole: I would tell on your cousin.

Anaya: I have two uncles, and one is very protective. And when I told them, nobody known it at the time, because they know how he is….

Natalia: But you—who you told?

Anaya: I told my uncle. And he and my other uncle put a gun to his head, getting ready to scrap with him and whatever. And my aunt? Forget it! My aunt? I only have one aunt. My grandmother had two girls, my aunt and my mother, and the rest was all boys. But my aunt was like, "Hell no. I don't want you near him. Stay away from him."

When the male members of their households execute "street justice," girls feel relieved that they have someone "protective" looking out for them to keep them safe. But these are also inherently double-bind situations; for Anaya and Natalia the message was "I'm keeping you safe," while the context—communicated through the exercise of male violence against someone (like them) less powerful—was "If you don't do what I want, I will hurt you." The tension here arises from the fact that while girls' abusers are being punished for their offenses, the punishment meted out is brutal physical violence, which simultaneously reaffirms men as the ones with power

and girls as the powerless. This example of answering one act of violence with another illustrates the way that these various forms of interpersonal violence reinforce one another to create a web of current and past violence. Natalia's disclosure of sexual abuse and the attack on her abuser is a second example; her subsequent teasing at the hands of her brother is a third. In Anaya's case, the additional meta-message from her aunt—above the multi-layered violence—was that the abuse was somehow her fault. That is, rather than control the behavior of the cousin, Anaya must ultimately own any future responsibility for the violation of her body by making the correct choices. This logic assumes she is able to control—and therefore is responsible for—her own victimization.

As we have seen, the STARS girls struggled mightily with disclosure—with whom they might tell, when, and under what circumstances. Indeed, as Black feminist anti-violence activists have argued, disclosure is affected by many warring impulses: wanting to avoid supporting neoliberal ideology's inheritance from Moynihan, e.g. stereotypes of Black women as hypersexualized, of Black men as rapists and criminals, and of Black culture generally as pathological; and on the flip-side wanting to avoid *disproving* stereotypes of, or complicating bromides about, the strong Black woman and the "honorable" Black family; and their support of Black men.[120] Indeed, this is where neoliberal ideology departs from Moynihan and

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[120] For more on this see Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. Especially Chapter 7; Traci L. West, *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). Especially Chapter 3. See also Derrick Bell, "The Sexual Diversion: The Black Man/Black Woman Debate in Context," in *Black Men on Race, Gender, and Sexuality: A Critical Reader*, ed. Devon W. Carbado (New York: New York University Press, 1999).; Nell Painter, "Hill, Thomas, and the Use of Racial

"innovates," exemplifying neoliberalism's incoherence and creating a double-bind. Neoliberalism—by giving rhetorical primacy to the individual and the private—encourages scholars, law enforcement, communities, and girls' families alike to ask all the wrong kinds of questions: Who was the perpetrator? Did the victim somehow encourage the abuse? Did she fight back? These questions obscure the degree to which gendered and racialized sexual violence is entrenched in U.S. power relations, and plays out in the STARS participants' experiences of sexual violence. In fact it is not the community, or the girls, or even the perpetrators who are pathological: it is the larger system.

Indeed, intimate partner violence is so commonplace as to be part of the youth zeitgeist. But instead of accepting the discourse of individual pathology, girls illustrate a key element of their insurgent knowledge: in contrast to a systemic drive toward individualizing abuse, girls insist on understanding this abuse within its social context. The girls, responding to the legacy of Black women's silence around abuse to which Collins and West referred, were reticent to blame outright men of color for their behavior. Malika explained intimate partner and domestic violence thusly: "[T]he young men nowadays, they been through a lot, so they take out their anger on everybody out [sic]…" Though less defensive of male abusers, Natalia indicated both the widespread nature of this violence and its acceptance among her peer group, suggesting, "[p]eople want to impress their friends. It's all about image. When boys hit girls it's because they friends tell them to 'Put her in her place.'" Girls'

Stereotype," in *Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).; and Charlotte Pierce-Baker, *Surviving the Silence: Black Women's Stories of Rape* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998).

contextual understanding of their social worlds is inherent in this passage, as is the connection between gendered violence and social capital/image-building, implicit elsewhere in the larger culture.

This legacy of sexual abuse has contributed to the conjoined forces of coerced silence and trauma among Black women. As Traci L. West argues, Black women who have been victimized "are compelled to assume the qualities of shamefulness and invisibility," responses that "further contribute to their emotional and spiritual trauma."[121] Recall here Michelle and Stephanie's strategic shifting to performances of "smiling." West's argument supports my suggestion that this "smiling" ought not be read as acceptance of their own objectification, but rather constitutes a strategic response of isolation and self-protection when they are caught between multiple articulations of violence.

Patricia Hill Collins, in *Black Sexual Politics*, traces the history of sexual violence against Black women within its larger social context. Rather than a private, individual experience, Collins suggests it is inseparable from larger methods of social control. "In American society," she writes, "sexual violence has served as an important mechanism for controlling African Americans, women, poor people, and gays and lesbians, among others."[122] The relationship, particularly in the Southern US, of lynching and rape produced a binary in which, as Collins astutely notes, "men were victimized by lynching and women by rape. Lynching and rape also reflected the type of binary thinking associated with racial and gender segregation mandating

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[121] West, *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics*. 2.
[122] Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. 216.

that *either* race *or* gender was primary, not both."[123] As a public spectacle, lynching,

and later police brutality and state-sanctioned violence, came to be viewed as

violence visited upon Black men, whereas the rape of Black women—a largely

private (or at least seldom as public) experience—was of secondary concern. Sexual

abuse by white men of Black women, however, was rampant, and established the race

and class supremacy of white men through the dual forces of physical domination of

Black women and emasculation of Black men by making visible their inability to

protect Black women from brutality and trauma.   Assaults were part of a vicious

cycle, both the result and the production of a cultural and legal discourse that held

Black women to be inherently promiscuous and therefore impossible to violate.[124]

The result is a discourse that locates the responsibility for brutality in the violated

individual.

> Because rapes have been treated as crimes against women, the culpability of the
> rape victim has long been questioned. Her dress, her demeanor, where the rape
> occurred, and her resistance all become evidence for whether a woman was even
> raped at all. Because Black women as a class emerged from slavery as collective
> rape victims, they were encouraged to keep quiet in order to refute the thesis of
> their wanton sexuality.[125]

Moreover, placing the questions officials inevitably pose after an assault takes place

alongside the super-predator/"gang girl" stereotype illustrates the fact that neoliberal

cultural work at once condemns, erases, and remixes this old trope, framing the issue

thusly: Was she a "bad girl"? Or was she in a "bad neighborhood"? Against this

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[123] Ibid.

[124] James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, & Race in U.S. Culture.*
134. See also Theresa Raffaele Jefferson, "Toward a Black Lesbian Jurisprudence,"
Boston College Third World Women Law Journal 263(1998).

[125] Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism.*
223.

cultural work, women of color must make difficult decisions about how making public their victimization—in recent decades occurring more often at the hands of men within their racial, ethnic, and geographic communities—might affect them, their families, and their neighborhoods. The issue of speaking out is further compounded by the messages girls receive about their own positionality as sexual objects rather than sexual subjects, and their punishment when this subjectivity is asserted.

In fact, notwithstanding neoliberal nostrums about the free individual subject, girls' objectification extends to the wider public sphere, where they are often hypersexualized. There is an extensive literature on the extent and effects of the eroticization of girls in the media. For girls of color, this gender oppression is compounded by a history of racial oppression and is inherently connected to the legacy of racialized and gendered control exercised by the state, as Collins outlines.[126] As Isabela Molina Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia have argued,

> [s]exuality plays a central role in the tropicalization of Latinas through the widely circulated narratives of sexual availability, proficiency, and desirability. For centuries the bodies of women of color, specifically their genitals and buttocks, have been excessively sexualized and exoticized by U.S. and European cultures.[127]

Defined in the larger cultural sphere by their "exotic" sexuality—this construction itself being a form of domination—Latinas have also historically struggled with patriarchal control by men in their communities and homes. And like their Black female counterparts, the discourse of Latinas' sexual availability and promiscuity

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[126] Ibid. See also Sharpley-Whiting, *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women*.
[127] Isabel Molina Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture," *The Communication Review* 7(2004). 211.

runs the risk of making them similarly "impossible to violate."[128]

It is crucial to note here that STARS girls' experiences of interpersonal violence are in line with national statistics of the violence affecting court-involved girls, and not uncommon for girls more broadly. According to national data, unwanted sexual attention affects more than 50% of all girls. Twenty-four percent have experienced rape or coercive sex and 17% have experienced incest.[129] Detained and incarcerated girls are significantly more likely to have suffered physical and sexual abuse than girls nationwide. Studies of girls in detention suggest that more than 50% of this subset of them have been sexually abused (that is, with direct sexual contact), with some studies indicating as many as 84% have been physically or sexually abused.[130] Add emotional abuse, and the number can be as high as 92%.[131] In New York, an informal survey conducted by the Office of Children and Family Services found that 70% of the girls in its custody had experienced physical or sexual abuse prior to incarceration—and with all these numbers we need to keep in mind this is what girls report.[132] As we have seen, the complexities of disclosing abuse, let

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[128] It is important to note, however, that the history of African slavery in the U.S. means that there is significantly more historical and legal practice applying this narrative to Black women's victimization.

[129] Richie, "Queering Antiprison Work: African American Lesbians in the Juvenile Justice System." 78.

[130] Meda Chesney-Lind, *Girls, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2003)., 38; K.A. Abram et al., "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Youth in Juvenile Detention," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 61(2004).

[131] Chesney-Lind, *Girls, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*. 146. Study from 2000.

[132] Mie Lewis, *Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2006), Lewis, "Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls." 27.

alone reporting it to authorities, suggests that many more instances of abuse may be happening that these figures reflect.

Searching for "Home" in Elected Families

In the face of this violence at home, girls explained that romantic relationships were one of the primary resources to which they turned to counter their vulnerability, isolation, and absence of familial support.   In their accounts, though, these too were characterized by mistrust, betrayals and disloyalty, and violence. Girls represented both hetero- and homosexual relationships as risky. One of the central elements of girls' relationships was the specter of cheating, which dominated much of the girls' interactions with their partners. This fear of potential betrayal arises primarily from previous experiences with cheating partners, which, particularly when the betrayal was public in nature, left girls feeling humiliated and, worse, vulnerable precisely because of their weakness. Girls explained that cheating is a given in almost every relationship; all the STARS girls had been cheated on by their partners, and many had cheated on partners themselves. Natalia's most distinct memory of romantic betrayal involved a much younger family member at one of her family events:

> Yeah. So I was at this party with him, we was sitting together, and he got tight because they party before we went to, I got into some shit…. And it got me pissed, so we left. He was already pissed at me, but I didn't care. I'm only 17, you're 22 but I'm acting older than you. Come on. Grow the fuck up. Act your age. Whatever. So we go to this party, and he goes, "Oh, I'm not gonna do nothing." I'm like, "Come on, let's dance." He's like, "No, I don't want to dance." He's telling me, go ahead, I could go dance. So I'm like, "I don't give a fuck, so I'm a go dance." So I go dance with somebody. But when I see him dancing with a fucking girl, mind you that's my little cousin you're dancing with and she's only 15. I'm like, "What are you doing? Yo, what are you doing? Mandy, can you please go over there?" Come to find out I go to the store for them, come back, and he's trying to grab her number. I broke out, yo. I broke

out. Everybody like, "Oh shit. Natalia's spazzing. Nobody say nothing. Nobody say nothing." 'Cause they know how I am. I go crazy. I got crazy.

Recall that Natalia's family already sends her overt and covert messages about her self-worth, her sexuality, and her gender expression. When she brought her boyfriend, to whom she was emotionally attached, into her family and he hit on her younger cousin, he confirmed all those messages. Her anger here can and should be seen as expressions of betrayal, and vulnerability.

Partners often use this fear of cheating as a method to control and intimidate girls. This intimidation is not always blatant. Sometimes it comes in the form of the partner controlling with whom his or her girlfriend speaks or interacts. "I can't dance with nobody," Jessie said of her long-term, serious boyfriend, "'cause he knows how I dance. He says I dance like a little whore. He's like, 'You dance like a whore. You're dancing with me.'" Jessie, who unbeknownst to her boyfriend had a history of engaging in prostitution, laughed this off. She continued, "I can only dance with the group that we're in. It's like me, three other girls that we all know, and then the guys. So it's like he'll dance with them, we all dance with each other. But anybody outside that group? Whew! He'll be, 'What are you doing?'" Jessie's laughter here mirrors Malika's laughter at the memory of her grandmother chasing her with a paddle, ready to dispense punishment, or Stephanie's "smiling." Jessie implicitly acknowledges the double-bind situation she is presented with by her boyfriend. His message: "Dance like a whore for me" is at odds with the meta-message, "Being a whore is shameful." Her laughter is a form of shifting in the face of his objectification of her.

Cherry, 18, explained that her boyfriend periodically demanded knowledge of

her Facebook password, which he would use to log into her account to delete pictures of her he didn't like—pictures of her with male friends or pictures he deemed too sexual. To counter this, she created a second profile. "I don't go on my other screen name, only when we break up or whatever. So I made a new screen name. This one he knows about. I only have family and guy friends that he knows, that he's cool with and I'm cool with." Like Jessie's boyfriend, Cherry's boyfriend seeks to control her behavior—particularly her sexuality and interactions with other men, in this case via the virtual erasure of her identity and relationships. Rather than confront him, and risk a potentially abusive interaction, Cherry reacts to this double-bind by complying with his wishes (shifting), while simultaneously strategically keeping a second account. All the girls who participated in that session—Jessie, Cherry, Natalia, and Maribel—were aware of this strategic shifting. As Jessie put it, "It's crazy how we working around our men."

Almost half the girls involved in the group discussion sessions identified as "gay." Interesting conversations arose among the girls about the similarities between experiences of different and same-sex intimate partner violence. Anaya, one of two pregnant, bisexual participants who participated in this study, explained, "I date older men because then I can have a positive relationship." Describing her daughter's father, she qualified this. "Not old guys—he's in his late 20s, early30s." Nicole appeared to feel excluded from this discussion at first, retorting, "I don't date boys so I don't know." But Anaya, having experienced romantic relationships with both sexes, jumped in to create space in the discussion for Nicole: "But girls can abuse girls! I know my girl, she did the same shit: 'If I can't have you nobody will. You

ain't never leaving me.' I was like, 'Damn.' I could never leave her. She would

stomp me." While Anaya's current girlfriend, or "wife" as she calls her elsewhere,

was verbally abusive and clearly threatened physical violence as well (as evidenced

by Anaya's belief that she would "stomp," or assault, her), the man with whom she

conceived her baby had actually been physically abusive on numerous occasions.

"My baby father," she said, "we argue for, like, no reason. And he be smacking me,

tell me 'I'll smack the shit out if you if you keep it up.' I was scared of him, though."

After hearing Anaya's experiences with her "wife," Nicole readily jumped in with

stories of her own.

Sometimes the efforts of girls to recreate "home" with romantic partners are

sub-rosa, but often they are explicit. When Jessie was 13, she was dating a 22-year-

old and got pregnant. "My mother looked at it like, I'm not kicking you out, but he

made his bed now he gotta lay in it. So she was like, 'Call him up, tell him the

situation. If you want to stay there, stay there unless it's a issue.' He had his own

apartment, so he was like, 'It's not an issue. You could come live with me. Come

on.' So it was ok." At the age of 13, Jessie was thrust into the role of "mother and

housewife," and was ill-prepared for both. Her desires for a safe, supportive "home"

were soon thwarted by her boyfriend's controlling and violent behavior. Once Jessie

began living with him, he became controlling and verbally and physically abusive.

After months of abuse, including after the birth of their daughter, she decided she

needed to leave for her own, and especially their daughter's, safety.

> My daughter was four months old and we was fighting and he got mad because I
> was leaving. So he picked up the knife and held it to my throat and was like, "If I
> can't have you, nobody will." Like, I thought he would kill me. And to this day I
> can't play fight with nobody or it gets serious. And I can't fight with somebody,

so if I get into a dispute I rather sit down and talk it out like normal adults, because I can't argue about it because it just takes me back to that point.

Jessie's situation is complicated on numerous levels. Having experienced physical abuse from her mother, Jessie, a 7th grader, with the encouragement of her mother, sought refuge with a man almost twice her age. At his hands she was assaulted with a level of violence that left her severely traumatized. Her solution—to try to "talk it out like normal adults"—sometimes works for her and sometimes doesn't. Depending on the behavior of the other person involved in the dispute, she is equally likely to black out, as she described it, and become violent herself.[133]

Even when girls find sustaining, supportive relationships, these are severely complicated by previous experiences of gender-specific violence girls have encountered. Girls' trauma histories surface in their interactions with their boyfriends and girlfriends, and affect their abilities to be emotionally and physically intimate with their partners. For example Jessie, who had also been raped, found that if she was arguing with her boyfriend and he "grabs my coat, I'm like, 'Get off me! Why you touching me?!'" Girls were affected by their own trauma reactions as well as those of their female partners. For Nicole, this trauma manifests itself in her relationship as a result of her girlfriend's history of sexual abuse rather than her own. "Like, my girl? She been raped," Nicole explained. "And when I be grabbin' her, like, I be grabbin' her, like if she got a scarf on and I grab the scarf and pull her, she be like, 'Wait. You're giving me a flashback.' What the freak? Everything I do be a flashback. Be getting me tight." Anaya, whose cousin sexually abused her,

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[133] In the context of trauma-informed clinical practice, this is also symptomatic of post-traumatic stress disorder. See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*.

explained that she continued to be "haunted" by that experience and said it absolutely affects the way she thinks about (specifically male) potential partners.

> Now that I'm gonna have a daughter, I'm not just gonna bring any guy around my daughter. I don't know what your history is, and I don't know your experience with kids. I'm not gonna leave them around my daughter by herself. I know if they treat my daughter right then they gonna treat me right. But I'm not just gonna leave you around my daughter. Like, on the real? It's different now when you have a kid.

Her trauma history leads her to anticipate vetting all potential male partners to avoid gender-based violence toward her daughter.

Independence, Loyalty, and Street Justice in Biological and Elected Families

Girls insisted on maintaining their sense of independence and non-reliance on others, at the same time that they recognized and verbalized alternative romantic dynamics. Recall that Jessie was involved in a long-term relationship that she deemed positive, despite its double-binds and implied threats. In one of our group discussions, she got into a debate with Anaya about the qualities a "positive relationship" should possess and how those in one should feel. I include it here, despite its length, because it demonstrates both girls' visions of a "positive relationship" and the degree to which that vision is at odds with their experiences of violence, betrayal, and abandonment both by family and prior romantic partners.

> Jessie: [Your partner] treat you, like, they treat you sweet. Like, I can't say give you what you want, but they fulfill your needs.

> Anaya: I ain't the type to—I ain't the type. They gonna want something in return. Even if I don't ask, and I just don't take it.

> Jessie: But if he's your man for a long time and he know you need money, he's gonna be like, 'You know what, baby? Here.' Or if she's your girl, she'll be like, 'Yo, here you go. I know you need it.'

Anaya: But no, my way, my train of thought is different. Because even if I need it or I want it, I'm not gonna take it, because they gonna think you owe them.

Jessie: It should not be tit for tat.

Anaya: It's not that. It's just important. I raised myself to be an independent person.

Jessie: Of course.

Anaya: I been on my own since I was 12 years old, so I raised myself to be an independent person. Everything I got, I got on my own. I don't take nothing from nobody. I'm very independent. That's why, I'm not even gonna lie, that's why I wasn't even gonna tell my baby's father, because I'm an independent person.

Jessie: My baby's father, we share a bank account for my daughter, and sometimes there's extra money in there. And I'll ask my baby's father and he'll be like, 'Oh, I put it there. ' And I don't like that because I don't need it.

Elise: So do you distrust when people give you money?

Jessie: It's not that I don't trust them, because every relationship is different. But with my husband, me and him, I don't ask him for nothing. And he gets mad, 'You can't be so independent. You got a whole family now. It's like, everybody takes care of each other. It's not like, 'Oh, you need this so….' It's not like that.

Anaya: I can't do that. I don't know why. I just tell myself, I can't do that, at all. I like to earn it myself. 'Cause then I'll feel good about it. I earned it myself. And then at the end of the day they can't be like, 'Oh, without me you could never.'

Jessie: It's true, it's true. I act like that with my baby's father. I don't want him to think, 'Oh, where she is it's because of me.' When it comes to a man, I'm not gonna ask you for nothing. I could be down and out. I'm not gonna ask you for nothing. Nothing at all. But I just feel if you so-called my husband, not my man, not my boyfriend, not my girl, whatever it is. You my husband? I shouldn't have to ask for nothing. Just like if you're married, it's no 'I'm independent.' Y'all are independent. 'Cause you work, he works, so you don't really *need* anything from him—y'all benefit from each other.

While Jessie articulates a relationship dynamic of shared support and mutual

emotional and financial trust, even with her current partner (whom she here refers to

as "husband" in contradistinction to "man" or her "boyfriend", despite the fact that they aren't legally married) she is unable to fully enact it. She continues to fall into patterns of independence and self-reliance rather than appear to need others. At the same time, she is capable of imagining an alternative family structure and dynamic in which "I'm independent" is replaced by "Y'all independent." That is, where the individual is replaced by a cohesive collective. Anaya's unwavering insistence on her own independence is shared by Jessie, whose response "of course," indicates the degree to which this is a dominant message girls receive and subsequently re-enact; that is, her response suggests the shared value of independence and self-sufficiency.

For the STARS girls who were mothers, there was a unique tension between independence and connection that surfaced vis-à-vis their children, especially their daughters. Anaya toyed with not divulging her pregnancy to the baby's father because she did not want to expose herself to being told she only got where she was because of him. Jessie, though committed to building a family with her boyfriend, like Anaya simultaneously insists on maintaining her own independence and asserting her own strategic decisions (rather than compulsions based on need or weakness) in forging emotional connections with men.

> [My daughter] called [my boyfriend] Daddy. She sees her own father and calls him daddy, but she calls him daddy as well. I told her, 'That's not daddy.' She's like, 'I know.' And I told him from day one, 'You not her step-father. If you feel you want to drop that label on you, it's 'cause you take that responsibility. I'm not dropping that responsibility on you. Because I could take care of her myself. I been doing that for how long?' Her father don't do much. But I keep him in her life. Because I didn't have the privilege of knowing my father that much.

Here, Jessie's lack of a relationship with her own father (who had been incarcerated since her birth) trumps her desire to keep her daughter away from the man who had

held a knife to her throat and threatened her life. Her anger and frustration manifest themselves in her narrative, and indeed actual maintenance, of independence from her child's father and her refusal to be perceived as manipulating her boyfriend into assuming responsibility for her daughter. Jessie and Anaya's differing levels of willingness to form alliances in romantic relationships illustrate the logic-of-violence double-bind's manifestation in girls' romantic lives: they are receiving messages that a healthy relationship revolves around trust and mutual support; the meta-message, however, in past relationships and in both girls' current relationships, is that trusting one's partner puts one in danger and mutual support leads to manipulation.

This discourse of independence—often a complicated outgrowth of girls' experiences of violence and betrayal—colludes with a discourse of loyalty and responsibility to compel girls to remain in dangerous or violent relationships. There is an extensive literature on the role of loyalty among inner-city, Black and Latino urban, and "ghetto" communities.[134] Loyalty was an organizing principle for all the girls in this study, and most often was articulated in relationship to their family members. In fact, Stephanie described loyalty as the most common value unifying her neighborhood (in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx). Loyalty was so essential, she argued, because "there's always some kind of conflict and like, somebody is, like, fighting. So people take loyalty…seriously." Because of the ubiquity of interpersonal violence, many members of particular low-income neighborhoods feel an imperative to protect themselves by aligning themselves with

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[134] Loyalty has most often been explored in the context of men, and often through "street ethnographies." See Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City.*, Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, Second ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

others who will "have their backs." While this is discussed in detail in the following chapter, here I am interested in extending the analysis of loyalty beyond the social realm and into the familial realm.

Girls tend to be exceedingly loyal in instances where they detect vulnerability in those they care for, particularly in situations where those people could potentially be victimized. When a family member is disrespected, for instance, girls feel obligated to come to his or her defense (another example of "street justice"). This is especially true when the family member involved is a younger sibling or cousin. Often, girls resort to physical violence to defend their slighted family members, as Natalia described here:

> So I was at this party with [my baby's father], … he got tight because I got into some shit. I fucked up this kid for coming out his face towards my sister. I was like, 'You don't talk to a female disrespectfully. It doesn't matter if you're joking or not.' So I fucked him up.

When Natalia's sister was disrespected, she got angry ("tight") and physically assaulted him.

Having themselves experienced isolation and the challenges of "personal responsibility"—for many, as previously noted, this meant having found solutions both to and in being "homeless"—girls actively worked to protect their children and younger family members from feeling that they, too, had to "raise themselves." Notably, this was a common thread among girls' narratives. Each of the girls I talked to, in fact, had a child, sibling, or cousin for whom they felt responsible, and whose respect or esteem they felt they had lost as a result of their involvement in the criminal justice system. Maribel expressed feeling responsible to her little sister, and interpreted her court involvement as a failure to uphold her responsibility to "be an

example for her." This feeling was intimately connected to Maribel's larger sense of isolation from her family, rooted in what she saw as a series of mistakes that labeled her as irresponsible and disloyal. This created a double-bind for her and for other girls, whose court-involvement came about as a consequence of another form of loyalty or responsibility.

> Jessie: Like, when I was in jail, my daughter was like, Mommy, why you left? Why you left me?

> Natalia: My little sister made me cry saying that, saying, "I miss you. Come home."

> J: Yeah. I cried every day.

> N: I cried on my niece birthday. I was tight. That's my heart right there. I was tight, yo.

> J: I changed, too. I am more straight. I can't go back. There's too much at stake. I can't go out in the street and do dirt. [Dropped] When I was in jail, and I talked to my daughter, and she was like, "Mommy. I miss you. Why you left me?" It hurt. When I look at her now, sometimes I get tears, because it hurts. And I don't want to be the one to cause her pain. I can't keep her from all pain, but I don't want to be the one to cause her pain, and I did. I feel I failed her when I did that, and I don't want to go back. I don't want to do it again. So it's like, it had me wake up.

To be sure, these stories are where the girls allow themselves to express regret and vulnerability most openly, situating emotional reactions in loved ones, while staying "rational" themselves. But the primary animating factor behind girls' feelings of responsibility is their desire *not* to abandon or leave younger or vulnerable loved ones in states of confusion or isolation. In many ways, this is an act of resistance against neoliberal individualism; their insurgent understanding and enactment of responsibility is not "personal," but familial, or collective.

It is important to note that this discourse of responsibility remains powerfully gendered, with girls feeling pressure to be obedient, self-sacrificing, and to nurture other members of their nuclear families. Though she no longer lives with her mother or siblings, Maribel still struggles with a sense of responsibility for and to them. She feels particularly badly about her court involvement and subsequent participation in the STARS program because of all the ancillary effects on her family, including her little sister:

> So, I mean, the thing is this is me putting pressure on [my mother], 'cause she is already dealing with, you know, like trying to get a job. She has my brothers and sisters, too, to take care of. You know, and I'm like the oldest. I should—I'm supposed to be an example to my little sister especially. And my younger sister, the other day when I went to court, my last court date, Mami took her with her, and my little sister asked, oh, so, am I—that if I'm a criminal now. So, I mean, that hurted me, because that's my little sister. I'm supposed to be an example for her. And then for her to see me going back and forth from house to house and all that stuff, and then me and my mom not getting along, and like now I feel bad.

Tellingly, Maribel feels responsible for her mother being overwhelmed, or under pressure—a state that Maribel recognizes is compounded by her mother's own difficulties raising multiple young children while unemployed and living in public housing.[135] This sense of responsibility to and for others often extends to girls' parents, despite or perhaps because of, the often tumultuous histories of these relationships. During one of our group sessions, Jessie answered her phone. After listening to her mom for a while, she said, "Mom, it's going to be ok. Are you ok? He doesn't hit you with anything you can't handle." She got off the phone and

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[135] To be sure, Maribel's mother was caught in her own double-bind. Given the prohibition of individuals with felony convictions in public housing, Maribel's mother might have faced eviction if she was caught allowing Maribel to live with her. For more on this, see Lipsitz, "'In an Avalanche Every Snowflake Pleads Not Guilty': The Collateral Consequences of Mass Incarceration and Impediments to Women's Fair Housing Rights."

whispered, "I'm gonna die." It took her almost fifteen minutes to recover from that conversation and for her to resume participation. She never disclosed what her mother had been "hit" with. Like Jessie, Natalia often found herself worried about her father, because she was aware that his prior incarceration for a felony made finding meaningful work difficult for him. Consequently, whenever her parents fought, she described being on pins and needles, concerned her mother would kick him out and he would be on his own. She was very worried for him and his future. These experiences are representative of the role many girls are asked to play vis-à-vis their parents. Rather than observing a clear demarcation between adult and child, girls were expected to be loyal and responsible to their parents. And here we encounter yet another iteration of the logic-of-violence double-bind. The message girls get—"Blood is thicker than water," (that is, "as a family our job is to look out for one another")—is often directly contradicted by the context—serious and/or ongoing violence at the hands of family members, for whom blood sometimes seems not nearly thick enough. As we saw earlier, calling attention to this tension is itself interpreted as an act of disloyalty, and is therefore punished, often by ostracism from the family. Ultimately, the majority of girls elected to mask their fear of being confronted by their abusers. Recall Anaya's description of her abuser, her cousin: "It's rough. […] I hate seeing his face to this day. But we grew up together, so what else can I do?" Here, the discourse of loyalty to family and shared history trump Anaya's desire to avoid her cousin, or exclude him from her life entirely.

Conclusion

As the passage from bell hooks' *Belonging* that serves as this chapter's epigraph suggests, in our cultural dreamwork home is "the place where the me of me" matters. Girls repeatedly described instances in their families and romantic relationships where the "me of me" was denied, or devalued, where they were treated as objects to be disciplined or used rather than as complex subjects. Parents and intimate partners often expected girls to control their sexuality in its many articulations, and exercise obedience, self-sacrifice, and responsibility for other family members. When girls failed to do this, they were punished.

This punishment occurred through messages that made them simultaneously invisible and hypervisible, objectifying them and denying their subjectivity. Denial manifested in the form of name-calling, as experienced by Natalia and Nicole, and in outright rejection, exemplified by Maribel, Michelle, and Amber. Girls were also punished physically, often disciplined for subverting gender(ed) expectations. This punishment also manifested in physical violence. Girls detailed fights with parents and siblings, over things both major and minor. Through these experiences they were inculcated into a logic of violence, within which—sometimes seeing no other options—they matched physical violence or threats of violence with their own violent responses. Often, girls were punished for attempting their own self-defense as well, as in the case of Alyssa and Maribel. This punishment often came under the guise of being "for your own good," one of the most common manifestations of the logic-of-violence double-bind girls experienced within their families. The message— "I'm

doing this to keep you safe"—was the precise opposite of its context—"You are not safe, because I am hurting you."

Girls' experiences of sexual violence—at the hands of actual family (Anaya) or elected family (Natalia)—was made even more complex through the layered messages they received, or thought they would receive, upon disclosure. Female family members, expected to provide nurture, might intentionally or unintentionally fail to offer girls the protection they expected. Male family members, in exercising revenge though "street justice," ultimately offered a form of protection that simultaneously reinforced girls' construction as victims. Boyfriends and girlfriends, knowingly and unknowingly, buttressed this sense of vulnerability by placing them in emotional and physical logic-of-violence double-binds that reiterated messages of deviant sexuality, powerlessness, and worthlessness.

Girls and young women of color have been constructed in the popular imaginary though a number of discourses that reduces them to a set of pathologies, objectifies them through statistical representation, or reframes as free individuals making "bad choices." In fact, as this chapter has illustrated, the neoliberal ideology that promulgates these three lenses has bled into systemic relationships, even at the family level, inflecting them with the ideology's own incoherence and giving rise to the double-binds that perpetuate it. Girls' insurgent knowledge reflects the systemic origin of their experiences of violence and resists efforts to pathologize them or their communities.

Chapter Four
Claiming Community

'Greed' and 'need' are not independent of each other. The presence of the very rich and the sharp shift in economy towards professionalization of this over-remunerated kind are integral to the mechanisms of poverty production.

-Doreen Massey[136]

Safe? Not safe. Never. It's out of the question. […] Never. It's a shootout, or a fight, it's whatever. Please. I ain't never safe.

-Jessie, 19

Sitting side-by-side on our own at a folding table usually surrounded by STARS'

GED students, Natalia and I looked over the photographs she had taken with a

disposable camera as part of our participatory research project about community. She

showed me pictures of her room, where cartoon drawings drawn by her father hung

on the wall, parks where she chilled with friends, bus and train stops she took to get

to and from the STARS program—at that point the only structured, regular activity in

which she was engaged—and photos of friends and family. Amidst these was a

picture of an abandoned lot (Figure 10). When I asked her what it was, she replied

casually, "Oh, that's an empty lot now. Two years ago a four-year-old girl was raped

and thrown over the fence. Somebody heard her crying and saved her. It used to be a

gas station." Natalia's description of the incident—the assault against the child, the

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[136] Doreen Massey, *World City* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007). 71.

girl's ultimate salvation at the hands of a neighbor, and her aside that the lot "used to be a gas station"—illustrates at once the lasting effect this disturbing event had on Natalia (being one of only 18 photos she took of her community for this project) and the commonplace nature of random acts of violence in her life. It also gestures toward the role violence played in shaping girls' experiences of their communities.

The previous chapter traced what I've called the logic-of-violence double-bind in girls' family and home lives in the era of neoliberalization—that is, the messages of safety and support they receive from family and romantic partners which are nested within contradictory contexts of threatened violence, or actual, ongoing emotional, physical, and sexual violence. Girls' responses to this home-based violence, and its violations of their subjectivity, included shifting, isolation, and attempts to recreate "home" externally. In this chapter, I examine the presence of the logic-of-violence double-bind as it operates on the community level.

Girls' portrayals of their communities ranged fluidly between the social relationships and physical spaces that comprised them.[137] They described numerous instances of neighbors taking care of one another. Usually in girls' accounts this

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[137] I use the term "community" and "neighborhood" here in deliberate opposition to "ghetto," a phrase often employed to describe low-income neighborhoods whose residents are largely people of color. The term "ghetto," as used by social scientists and urban historians *and* as used by members of the middle- and upper-middle class draws on a legacy of racist scholarship and social policy. As Stephen Gregory writes, "black inner city" and "black ghetto" have both been mobilized "to block or screen alternative and, for want of a better word, *ordinary* ways of understanding the lives of African-Americans." Girls' own use of the term "ghetto" is quite different, as discussed in depth in the body of this chapter. For more on this, see Stephen Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). For an opposing position, see Camilo José Vergara, *The New American Ghetto* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

caretaking manifested as vigilant neighbors "jumping in" to assist someone in the midst of a violent or dangerous encounter. Among these encounters were regular, brutal fights girls felt obligated to engage in, to protect themselves or to defend their families and friends. Fighting and "drama" were likewise a part of nearly every social gathering they could remember or imagine, from barbeques in the park to concerts they attended and nightclubs they frequented. Girls' accounts of their communities in this social capacity highlighted fights they had been in or witnessed; the necessity of being on the alert against rape, kidnapping, or being "jumped" (that is, physically assaulted by other youth); and feeling under a near-constant state of surveillance—from peers judging their clothing or weighing them up as potential adversaries, from neighbors trying either to protect them or protect others from them, and from adult men, treating them as available sexual objects.[138]

Not relegated solely to the social, as Natalia's photo project indicates, violence was a major structural component of girls' experiences of their communities as *place* as well. Her apparent non sequitur about the gas station in fact illustrates links between public and private disinvestment in STARS girls' communities and the violence that has taken root there. This violence was inseparable from the physical space of their neighborhoods—in the parks and fast food chains frequented by large groups of young people, abandoned lots and buildings, corners they avoided, or trains they took to "get away." What emerged from their narratives, again, was a profound sense of vulnerability, not just in the domestic sphere of their homes, but also in the physical and social spaces of their communities—spaces they moved into, in part, as

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[138] The most prominent surveillant entity girls identified was the New York Police Department. This is detailed in the following chapter.

an effort to avoid the violence in their homes. This chapter looks at girls' experiences of social and spatial community, arguing that each is inextricably linked to the other, in that girls' methods of interpreting and understanding their social worlds were fundamentally connected to the built environment and vice versa. I suggest that the logic-of-violence double-bind finds multiple articulations here, in girls' intimate peer relationships with "homegirls" and "acquaintances;" in discourses of loyalty and respect; and in the physical landscapes themselves. Girls are repeatedly presented with messages of safety and support, which are contradicted contextually by the regular and unpredictable violence to which they are exposed.

In making this argument, I draw on cultural landscapes theory and method to provide a reading of these girls' communities as "*node[s] at the intersection of any number of [...] knowledge networks.*"[139] I suggest that within their various, interconnected communities, girls struggled to resolve the discord between the discourses and demands of their peer networks, the myriad forms of adult surveillance they encountered (both positive and negative), and the discourses of neoliberal ideology within which their communities as a whole fought to become "visible." Privileging girls' insurgent knowledge about their communities induces a reordering of common assumptions that cast these girls as "delinquents" and "anti-social." Rather than actively seeking trouble or violence, these court-involved girls in fact went to extensive measures to avoid it in neighborhoods rife with state-

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[139] Richard H. Schein, "The Place for Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 4 (1997). 663.

sanctioned violence—measures that often unintentionally reproduced neoliberalism's atomization.

Girls' Social Spaces: Homegirls, Acquaintances, and the Geography of Trust

Girls' social networks were comprised of very few friends whom they identified as best friends. In their vernacular, these best friends were typically referred to as "homegirls," or "true" female friends. Given many girls' experiences with their families, and their search for "home" beyond the physical walls of their houses, the term "homegirl" assumes added weight. As girls were thwarted at home and in their romantic lives in their search for people in whom they could trust and by whom they could be protected, they often turned to friends. Community-level discourses privileging neighborhood, loyalty, and respect, in conversation with built environments exhausted by decades of economic and cultural disinvestment, generated a social and spatial atmosphere of betrayal and distrust. In their friendships, as in their family and romantic relationships, girls were confronted with numerous iterations of the logic-of-violence double-bind. Girls were afraid that those friends to whom they had exposed their vulnerabilities might betray them, revealing their vulnerabilities to the rest of the community, and—through that revelation— expose them to potential victimization and violence. Girls guarded against physical altercations and a variety of other illegal activities that they felt were an intrinsic component of their wider social networks, which included "friends" and "acquaintances." Girls' descriptions of their communities suggested that almost any engagement with the social and spatial aspects of their communities inevitably

brought them into contact with criminal and criminalized activities; this contact, then, was far from being a "personal choice."

The issue of trust arose in most girls' accounts of their friendships and peer groups, and they used it to explain why they had both few friends, particularly few *female* friends. Like most of the STARS girls, Natalia separated her peer network into three groups: homegirls/homeboys or true friends—"people I could tell any little thing to"; friends—"people I hang with, be cool with"; and acquaintances—"people I say 'Hi, Bye' to and maybe chill with once in a blue." The two most important qualities in friends were respect and loyalty—i.e. the ability to confide in someone and be relatively certain he or she would handle the information divulged respectfully *and* be consistently available for such confidences. In fact, Natalia traced her reluctance to form new attachments to the unexpected death of her best friend a year-and-a-half earlier. Her friend was eight months pregnant with her second child and died of a seizure. The baby survived, but her friend did not. This loss hit Natalia particularly hard because her mother wouldn't let her participate in the funeral rituals because of a history of "drama" between her mother and her friend's family. "Every day I wish she was still here," Natalia explained, hastily wiping tears from her face. "I wake up and think she's still alive, but she's gone and she's never coming back." Now, she said, has only three real close friends: her cousin—"my best friend, sister, cousin all wrapped up in one"—and two girls she met during the two years she lived with her god mother in Pennsylvania, with whom she talks to on the phone and on MySpace but hasn't seen in four years.

> I don't trust people that easy. I'm not really a phone person. Everybody says
> they don't know why I have a Sidekick. I don't know either. I just have it to

have it. Really, I do not like to be bothered. I do use AIM and hit people up that way. It will just sit in my bookbag for as long as it needs to. I used to fiend for a Sidekick 'cause everybody else had it. Now I want to throw it out the window.

Recall that Natalia was also the victim of repeated sexual abuse early in life at the hands of a young man who was "like a son" to her father, as well as emotional and occasional physical abuse at the hands of her parents and siblings. These experiences, combined with many other factors in her home and social life—deaths of people close to her, romantic betrayals, street reputation—severely complicated Natalia's willingness to make herself vulnerable to peers. As a result, she relied on friendships made very early in her life with girls she had lived with at one time or another. These friendships in their current incarnations had a controlled geographic component to them; none of the girls lived in her neighborhood, and she controlled their access to her daily life by limiting contact to occasional phone calls, AIM, and MySpace.

This same pattern—few select "true" friendships developed early in life based on a shared neighborhood, followed by geographic distance—was evident in many of the STARS girls' friendships. Jessie explained that her friends—those people whom she trusted and still communicated with—included her boyfriend, a male best friend, and "my homegirl…I only have one girlfriend." This young woman, Shanika, had been Jessie's friend for 10 years and was "from the same 'hood." One of Shanika's defining characteristics was the fact that she could be relied upon to be present when needed, while otherwise geographically separated from Jessie. Rather than getting together regularly, Jessie said, "we talk on the phone. And sometimes we talk every day for like three days, and then we won't talk for like two weeks." Both Jessie and

Natalia, then, selected as best friends girls whom they had known a long time and who were not part of their daily social or spatial lives. Consequently, Jessie and Natalia remained in control of what, why, and how information was divulged to their "homegirls", and had virtually guaranteed that that information could not make its way back to other "friends" in their neighborhoods through gossip or other social mechanisms. Cherry counted only "my boyfriend and my two best friends" among her real friends. Malika explained that she had a core group of three friends who, instead of residing in her Flatbush, Brooklyn, neighborhood lived out on Long Island. Malika gravitated toward these girls because "They was real. They was true friends. They were there for me. We had our ups and downs but we grew through that. They're here now." Indeed, as Malika's experience attests, this loyalty and dependability formed the essential, and reportedly rare, qualities most valued in a friend, in contradistinction to those one merely chilled with. Likewise, Stephanie's three close friends were made significantly earlier. "The circle of friends I'm talking about," she explained, "we all grew up in the same neighborhood, so we've known each other five or six years." Her "really good friends", as opposed to the more general acquaintances, are differentiated by the fact that they are "real…. Like, they not always in the streets as a lot of people is. They're into the books. They just like me. They do the same things. This is the age where you find yourself and find what you want to do with your life. A lot of my friends are in school or working. Trying to get somewhere." Since her pre-teen, she has not made any additional close friends and no longer lives near those three. She explained, "Of over one hundred friends that I've met not a lot of them have ended up being really good friends."

Friends in this middle category, for Stephanie, Jessie, Natalia, and most of the other STARS girls, were seen as nosy, invasive, and potential adversaries. Whereas girls' homegirls often shared their middle-class values of education, upward mobility, and crime-free behavior, "friends" were often "into the street." As I will discuss later in this chapter, for STARS girls the space of "the street" or "outside" was inseparable from an attendant social and cultural logic that governed nearly all their social interactions. Girls' response to the potential threat of those "in the street" was to keep tight control over those they trusted. As with Natalia, Jessie was easily irritated with those people in her life who did not qualify as true friends, i.e. those who were in the middle category of people she chilled with periodically but didn't count among her homegirls. During one of our interviews, one of these "friends" called her. Looking at her phone, she said curtly, "Who is calling me? It's irritating. Like, I don't mind having friends. They're just really irritating. Don't call my phone for nothing. I don't need this bullshit from nobody. Mind your business. It's just like, 'Keep your distance.'" Girls' strategic use of geographic isolation is here made explicit in Jessie's imperative that these friends "keep [their] distance." Moreover, her response—suspicion, emotional withholding, hesitance to extend her time or assistance—marked the dominant way girls interacted with all peers, excluding their homegirls and homeboys, but particularly other girls. Almost all the STARS girls reported having more male friends than female friends. As with Jessie, of Cherry's two best friends, only one was female. During one group interview, the STARS girls explained that girls' tendency toward "drama" (which they defined as fighting, gossip, and jealousy) made them favor boys over girls as friends.

Jessie: In general, I don't like females. I can't get along with females.

Cherry: Yeah.

Nicole: Oh my god, yes.

Jessie: I only have one female friend and I've been with her for a long time.

Cherry: Boys are just mad chill.

Maribel: I cannot chill with girls for the most part.

The passage above reveals the degree to which girls internalized and redeployed the same stereotypes levied against them, and how tightly these stereotypes and messages were woven in the fabric of girls' everyday lives. As a result, girls resorted to further isolation. Limiting the number of female friends to three or fewer, and to those made early in life in one's neighborhood of origin, was one of the primary strategies girls employed to actively avoid fights or other social problems.

Communities as Space and Place: A Cultural Landscape Analysis

Girls' experiences of the social and spatial aspects of their communities were dialectical; the physical landscape of their neighborhoods was inflected with, and influenced by their perceptions of, the violence and vulnerability they believed dominated their experiences in their communities.[140] While they are often studied separately, the built environment and urban geography are inseparable from the cultural practices and processes that act on and are acted out by its inhabitants. Pierce F. Lewis, in his pioneering 1979 article, suggested that the landscape was a more

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[140] Girls' perspectives of their neighborhoods offer a systems-level reimagining of the (neoliberal) vision of "broken windows."

straightforward text for analysis than other primary sources precisely *because* it is so

often overlooked as a recording of these practices and processes.

> Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form. We rarely think of landscape that way, and so the cultural record we have "written" in the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about how we describe ourselves.[141]

Some 20 years later, Richard H. Schein qualified Lewis' somewhat empiricist

argument by suggesting that the landscape might rightly be envisioned as a "node at

the intersection" of a number of discourses, even those in competition with one

another. "The cultural landscape, as discourse materialized, is simultaneously

disciplinary in its spatial and visual strategies and empowering in the possibilities

inherent for individual action upon the landscape," he wrote.[142] The racialized,

gendered, and classed strategies employed by the state in its discipline of

communities of color, in turn, should rightly be considered both discursive and

spatial. The inverse is also true: "[a] geographical imperative lies at the heart of

every struggle for social justice," writes Gilmore. "[I]f justice is embodied, it is then

therefore always spatial, which is to say, part of a process of making a place."[143] This

linking of justice and spatiality is part of a growing trend among scholars to see

place-making as central to the project of social justice and as a vital link between

theory and praxis. While "spatial injustice is produced top-down through the political

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[141] Pierce F. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 1999). 176.

[142] Schein, "The Place for Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene." 664.

[143] Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography." 16.

organization of space"—an explicitly neoliberal practice—Edward W. Soja reminds

us that the people who inhabit these spaces are always already exercising their agency

through the simple act of living:

> Since we construct our multiscalar geographies, or they are constructed for us by more powerful others, it follows that we can act to change or reconfigure them to increase the positive or decrease the negative effects. These efforts to make changes in our existing spatial configurations, whether they involve redecorating our homes, fighting against racial segregation in our cities, creating policies to reduce income inequalities between the developed and developing countries, or combating global warming do not express innocent or universally held objectives. They are the target and source of conflicting purposes, competing forces, and contentious political actions for and against the status quo. Space is not an empty void. It is always filled with politics, ideology, and other forces shaping our lives and challenging us to engage in struggles over geography.[144]

In short, the spaces the STARS participants inhabit are an integral part of the

creation of those discourses acting upon these girls and those discourses and

knowledge the girls themselves are producing. As Clyde Woods and Katherine

McKittrick point out, this reciprocity is an essential but often overlooked component

of "racialized spaces." "Socially distanced from what Audre Lorde calls 'a mythical

norm,' seemingly lacking enlightenment and positivist modes of knowledge while

also being rendered conspicuous 'objects-in-place,'" Woods and McKittrick argue

that Black histories, bodies, and experiences in fact "disrupt and underwrite human

geographies." Put another way, "Black geographies disclose how the racialized

production of space is made possible in the explicit demarcations of the space of *les*

damnés as invisible/forgettable at the same time as the invisible/forgettable is

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[144] Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). 19.

producing space...."[145] What emerges from the STARS girls' narratives complicates this a bit. Like the STARS girls themselves, their communities are invisible in their complexity at the same time that they are hypervisible in the media, in the nation's cultural dreamwork, and to the carceral archipelago that administers them.

Making visible court-involved girls invisible geography is a vexed ethical territory. While this project is, by its very nature, invasive, I sought to delimit that invasiveness by containing my observation and meetings with girls within the physical location of the STARS program, believing it ethically necessary to foreground its imbrication with the network of carceral surveillance. I wanted to keep my presence in girls' lives spatially bounded in such a way as to afford them some level of privacy and control over what they introduced to our conversations and, consequently, my study. Even with the inescapable power differentials, I could always ask, I reasoned, and they could always elect not to answer or, as they did more frequently, prevaricate or "shift."

Knowing that I wanted to privilege girls' experiences of their communities and neighborhoods meant that I needed to devise a way for girls to be as actively involved in the knowledge-production of this portion of the project as they were in the individual and group discussions. By this time, the group I was working with had dwindled to four, as girls successfully completed the program and "graduated," were sent to drug treatment programs, or were sent back to court and resentenced (likely, to prison). The remaining group—comprised of Cherry, Natalia, Maribel, and Jessie—were each given a disposable camera and

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[145] Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, ""No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean"," in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007). 4.

invited to take photos of places of importance in their everyday lives. After a week or so, I

collected the cameras, developed the photos, and brought them back to a group session, during

which the girls plotted the photos using Google Maps, locating each photo in its place in

geographic space (where possible) and writing a caption for each photo. We then used these

photos and maps as starting points for a group discussion on neighborhoods and community.

Though in some ways this methodology falls prey to the trap of surveillant scholarship I

sought to avoid, by placing the cameras in the girls' hands I hope to literally give my

participants the tools to frame the conversation about their community that followed. Data in

this discussion is also drawn from individual and group interviews.

Girls' Built Environments

The co-constitution of the social and spatial in girls' everyday lives must be

understood in the context of the larger cultural, political, and economic forces that

played a large role in the historical formation and evolution of their communities.

The STARS girls all lived in low- or moderate-income neighborhoods.[146] Their

parents and grandparents had lived through the period of economic disinvestment and

the attendant "blight" of the 1970s (see Figures 11 and 12), with those so-inclined and

able moving out of neighborhoods characterized by severe and pervasive poverty like

the South Bronx in favor of working-class neighborhoods like Flushing, Queens. All

had families who received public assistance, including though not limited to public

housing, Section 8 vouchers, and other forms of rent assistance. Girls' photos of their

communities—Sunset Park, Brooklyn; Flushing, Queens; the South Bronx; and

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[146] See Appendix A for a list of the girls and their neighborhoods. See Appendix B
for a map of girls' neighborhoods.

Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn—reflect some of this structural inequality. Pictures record fast food restaurants (Figure 1), liquor stores (Figure 2), bodegas (Figure 3), and shopping centers (Figure 4) with more fast food restaurants and chain stores. There is no record of the bustling Manhattan streets, full of the fashion, finance, and knowledge workers and the fine dining, theater-going, and luxury shopping invoked by New York City's neoliberal rebranding. These images suggest that the "Manhattanization" of New York City has only reached so far. None of these photos records the kind of images typically associated with urban "ghettos" though, either. All four neighborhoods are located in the "outer-boroughs," a term applied to any borough that is not Manhattan (e.g. the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island). The Manhattan-centric nature of the city's spatial logic is reflected in this term, which collapses all distinctions between boroughs.

Indeed, as the images reveal, the girls' communities differ from one another in many instructive particulars. Figures 1-4 all detail shopping areas in three of the four girls' neighborhoods, suggesting that while the luxuries of the neoliberal city may not have reached the outer-boroughs, the enjambment of consumption and community certainly has. Natalia's photo of "Unity Grocery & Deli" (Figure 3) announces the social class it serves through advertisements on its awning: "WIC, ATM, EBT CARDS, COLD BEER, SANDWICHES, PAY PHONE, ETC." Both federal subsidized food assistance programs, "WIC" refers for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, targeted at low-income mothers and children under five; "EBT CARDS" stands for "Electronic Benefit Transfer" Card, and refers to the state's method of distributing food stamps, or "Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program" as it was renamed in 2008. In an era of ubiquitous cell phones, the evocation of pay phones as a selling point further illustrates the relative economic constraints of local residents. Neither murals nor "artistic" tags, the spray-painted graffiti on the deli sidewall announces the presence of gang activity in the area. Cherry's images—1 and 2—are of the same shopping strip, which includes a "Kennedy Fried Chicken" fast food restaurant and "Zyr Liquor."

Figure 1: Cherry's Community
(Sheepshead Bay)
"A food place around my house; where all the kids be at most of the time."

Figure 2: Cherry's Community
(Sheepshead Bay)
"Where people get their bottles for any occasion."

Figure 3: Natalia's Community
(Sunset Park, Brooklyn)
"Corner store where all the kids go after school, by my bus stop."

Figure 4: Jessie Community
(Flushing, Queens)
"The strip where everybody do they shopping."

Figure 5: Maribel's Community
(South Bronx)
"Crotona Park, where I have to walk through to get to the train."

Figure 6: Cherry's Community
(Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn)
"The park in the projects; where the kids spend most of the time even late at night."
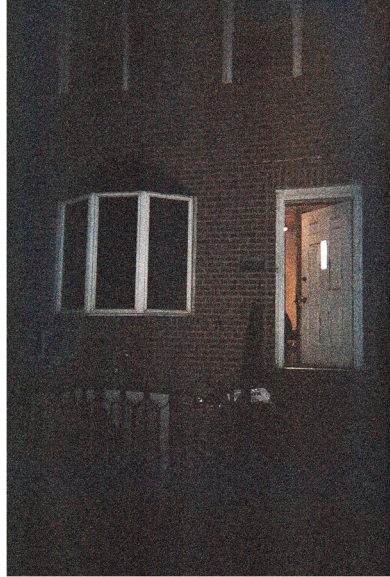
Figure 7: Natalia's Community
(Sunset Park, Brooklyn)
"Fronthouse→Community"
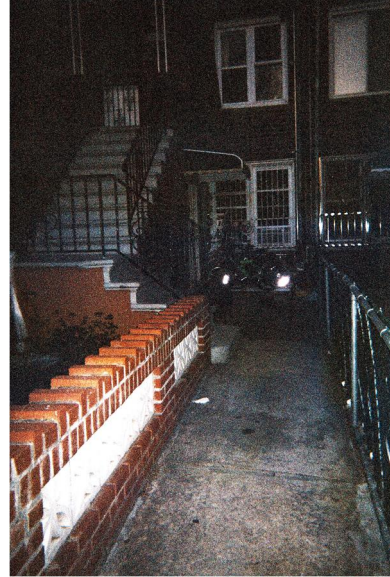
Figure 8: Cherry's Community
(Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn)
"The front of my house. I live on the 1st
floor and the landlord lives upstairs."

Figure 9: Cherry's Community
(Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn)
"The block up from where I live at,
where a lot of kids fight."

Figure 10: Natalia's Community
(Sunset Park, Brooklyn)
"Lot"

Other stores in the strip include a pharmacy and a shuttered dollar store. Compare

these to Figure 4, Jessie's neighborhood in Flushing, Queens. This photo is full of

shoppers, commuters, and diners all out on the street despite the inclement weather,

and reflects a much different approach to space. Here, stores still include fast food

restaurants (Wendy's and take-out Chinese food), dollar stores (AA Plaza), and chain

stores (Foot Locker and Duane Reade). These are part of mixed-use spaces, however,

co-located alongside dentist offices, credit unions, beauty salons, and high-rise

residential buildings. An elevated subway line runs over the buildings on the right

side of the shot, a counterpoint to the geographic isolation inherent in the other

photos.

It is suggestive that those spaces that arise out of different approaches to

community—the LeCorbeusien "radiant city" design of the public housing (Figure 6)

and Robert Moses' driving city (Figures 1, 2, 3, 9, and 10)—are also those devoid of

streetlife. Movement takes place out of the frame of the camera, with the only

activity being that which is implied by the bundled trash on the sidewalk and bicycle

leaning against the restaurant wall (Figure 1), cars, both parked and in motion

(Figures 2, 3, 9 and 10), and public parks conceived of as space "walk[ed] through to

get to the train." Each bespeaks a state of isolation. In what Dylan Rodríguez would

surely interpret as the exportation of the prison regime to communities of color,

Camilo José Vargara describes the change in urban architecture that occurred during

the 1970s and '80s thusly:

> Buildings grow claw and spikes, their entrances acquire metal plates, their roofs
> get fenced in…. Even in areas where statistics show a decrease in major crime,
> fortification continues to escalate, and as it does, ghettos lose their coherence.
> Neighborhoods are replaced by a random assortment of isolated bunkers,

structures that increasingly resemble jails or power stations, their interiors effectively separated from the outside…. In brick and cinderblock and sharpened metal, inequality takes material form.[147]

Girls' photos reflected this reality. Cherry's images of the liquor store and the larger shopping strip of which it is part feel almost like outposts. Likewise, those girls who elected to take photos of their homes captured images of windows blacked-out (Figure 7) or covered by iron bars (Figure 8). To be sure, these images are a far cry from the images of "the 'hood" that dominate in popular culture (Figures 11 and 12). For the girls who live in them, however, and presumably for those who purchase the window grates and who black out the windows, the row-house is not necessarily any safer than the project tower or the South Bronx of the 1970s.

The abandoned lot and schoolbus (Figure 10), alleys (Figure 9), and desolate spaces are not features of the "inner city" in a municipality with some of the highest land values in the world (alleys being essentially unheard of in Manhattan), but of the "outer city." These shots remind us that each of these girls lives at some remove from the urban center. In the preceding decades—through the 1960s and into the 1970s—there were significantly higher concentrations of low-income residents and residents of color residing in U.S. cities; the outer boroughs were the first stop in the subsequent waves of "white flight." Robert Moses' slum clearance efforts in the 1930s and '40s, as I will explore, began a process of Black and Latino flight of a much different sort, which has accelerated under neoliberalism's signature gentrification, inverting the legible messages and meanings of geography. As Vargara's observation about urban architecture suggests, these urban design and

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[147] Qtd Robin D. G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997). 50.

planning decisions, whether made by the state, or, as more recently, made by loosely-zoned private investment sprees, are not made in a vacuum, nor are they merely the logical responses to increased crime or poverty. Rather, as Massey has suggested, "the geography of inequality becomes both consequence *and further cause* of […] inequality."[148]

"Greed" and "Need" in New York City

How the STARS girls' communities assumed their current geographic and spatial contours is intimately tied to New York City's status as a "global city," a phrase primarily invoked to identify it as a locus of economic, political, and cultural power, and particularly of the production of highly-specialized services and financial goods.[149] As early as 1949, E. B. White could note in his famous essay "Here is New York" that the city

> is the concentrate of art and commerce and sport and religion and entertainment and finance, bringing to a single compact arena the gladiator, the evangelist, the promoter, the actor, the trader, and the merchant. It carries on its lapel the unexpungeable odor of the long past, so that no matter where you sit in New York you feel the vibrations of great times and tall deeds, of queer people and events and undertakings.[150]

The flipside of this energy, productivity, and innovation—so celebrated by politicians, the financial elites, and the cultural production machine—is that New

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[148] Massey, *World City*. 19.

[149] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). 5. For more on world cities, see Janet Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angelos: America's Global Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). And John Friedmann, "Where We Stand: A Decade of World City Research," in *World Cities in a World System*, ed. Paul L. Knox and Peter J. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[150] E.B. White, *Essays of E.B. White* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1999). 11.

York City is also, as Augustín Laó-Montes has argued, "paradigmatic of the urban landscapes of modernity and a herald of hegemonic political and cultural developments."[151] As Doreen Massey suggests in this chapter's epigraph, "greed" and "need" are inseparable from one another in New York City. Though the context of her argument is London, she suggests that the very terms of the neoliberal city's reinvention "are part of the dynamic behind this reproduction of inequality."[152] Understanding how the STARS girls move through their communities as places necessitates making visible the "vibrations" that resonate within them. How these neighborhoods developed, and how they came to be raced and classed under neoliberalization and the "global city" lays bare the history of state-sanctioned violence—violence which resurfaced in girls' own understanding of their communities and public spaces.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, New York attracted scores of immigrants and migrants from around the world. This period saw a number of vital world events that would have lasting impact on the ethnic and racial make-up of the city. The Spanish-Cuban-American-Filipino War of 1898, which established the U.S. as an imperial power, consolidated the contact between it and the Caribbean. As New York City emerged as the main hub of the empire's industry, finance, and trade, it drew increasing numbers of migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. The appropriation of Puerto Rico in 1898, the invasions and occupations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1914 and 1916, as well as military incursions in Central

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[151] Agustín Laó-Montes, "Introduction," in *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York City*, ed. Agustín Laó-Montes and Arlene Dávila (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). 18.
[152] Massey, *World City*. 62.

America around this same period further established ties, albeit often coercive ones, between the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean.[153] Because Puerto Ricans, as residents of a U.S. colony, held U.S. citizenship after 1917 with the passing of the Jones Act, they became the largest group of "Hispanos," "Latinos," and "Caribbeans" (as they were variously termed in census data) through the 1980s.[154] These residents, numbering 61,463 in 1940 according to U.S. Census data, settled in specific geographic areas. By far, most Puerto Ricans (60%) settled in El Barrio or la colonia hispana, as it was originally termed by the residents, though known more widely as East Harlem and South Central Harlem. Other heavily Puerto Rican neighborhoods grew up on Manhattan's Lower East Side and near Brooklyn's Navy Yard and ports, including along the Gowanus Canal and in Greenpoint and finally Red Hook.[155]

The turn of the century through World War II also saw two waves of the so-called Great Migration of African Americans moving to Northern and Western cities as Northern industrialization accelerated. The economic depression wracking the South certainly provided another major impetus for this move, as did Jim Crow. Jobs in the North seemed plentiful, and Black folks saw a potential escape from the severe and overt racism and violence that was still part of everyday life in Southern states.[156] Lynchings in the South reached their nadir during this period; while the majority of

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[153] Laó-Montes, "Introduction." 19. For more on the U.S. as an imperialist power, see Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).
[154] Laó-Montes, "Introduction." 20.
[155] Virginia E. Sánchez-Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). 53-63.
[156] For more on this, particularly the transformation of the racial regime in the south during this period, see Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso, 1998).

these victims were male, Black women's history of gendered violence is inscribed in this geographic movement as well, as previously noted. As Darlene Clark Hine has argued, many "quit the South out of a desire to achieve personal autonomy and to escape from sexual exploitation both within and outside of their families and from sexual abuse at the hands of southern white as well as black men."[157] Estimates put New York City's Black population at a little over 91,000 as early as 1910.[158] Once in New York City, African Americans, like their Latin American and Caribbean counterparts, were drawn via "chain migration" patterns to specific neighborhoods and communities (though usually not the same ones), as much for safety from racialized and (to follow Hine's lead) gendered violence as by choice. The most famous of these was Harlem in northern Manhattan, but African Americans also relocated to areas of Brooklyn (notably Bedford-Stuyvesant), the Bronx, and Queens.

The Great Depression—bookended by the First and Second World Wars—had a significant impact on African Americans in New York City. Between 1929 and 1933, manufacturing production saw a 50 % drop. As Stephen Gregory writes, "the largest concentrations of black industrial workers were in building construction and coal mining, both of which were stagnant during the depression. The vast majority of African-Americans were employed in marginal, unskilled, and semiskilled jobs, which a country tightening its belt tried to learn to live without. By the end of 1933, almost 18% of the U.S. Black population was on relief as compared to approximately

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[157] Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," in *The New African American Urban History*, ed. Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1996). 244.
[158] Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. 24.

10% of non-Blacks. In New York City, between 1935 and 1936, 40% of African-American families were living on welfare.[159]

If, as Julian Brash has argued, "for a significant portion of New York City's working class, the postwar years were something of a golden age," for a significant number of the city's residents of color, the progress of this period was mired in deeply rooted structural racial inequality, as it also was elsewhere.[160] During the 1940s and 1950s, more than 350,000 African Americans migrated to the city. By 1960, almost eight percent of New Yorkers (more than 600,000) were either first- or second-generation immigrants from Puerto Rico.[161] The racial, ethnic, and class identities of the city's neightborhoods further calcified during this period. Harlem, for instance, soon became synonymous with "slum." Robert Caro writes:

> If one stood, atop the Upper West Side's high ridge, in Morningside, St. Nicholas or Colonial Park and looked down to where the ridge fell suddenly into an alluvial plain once known as Harlem Flats, which in 1932 contained the city's Spanish, Negro, and Italian slum areas, he would see nothing…down to his left but a vast expanse of the asphalt gray of streets, the tar-paper gray of tenement roofs and the dingy red of tenement walls stretching endlessly eastward.[162]

Landlords in these and other "slums" increasingly saw their tenants as incapable of generating profits through rent payments, and consequently stopped investing in their buildings' maintenance. In Harlem, South Jamaica in Queens, Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn (Nicole's neighborhood), Morrisania-Mott Haven in the Bronx, the Lower East Side (Anaya's neighborhood), and other communities where poor residents

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[159] Ibid. 40.

[160] Brash, *Bloomberg's New York: Class and Governance in the Luxury City*. 25.

[161] Joshua B. Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000). 26.

[162] Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975). 337.

resided, landlords stopped paying real estate taxes in the hopes that the city would

seize their buildings. Those who took a more active hand in removing these buildings

from their books torched their own buildings, hoping to claim insurance money.

This process of neighborhood disinvestment was compounded by banks and

insurance companies "redlining" certain neighborhoods from which they withheld

investments.[163] The Federal Housing Authority, created in 1934, made redlining

public policy, in fact, through the creation and systemization of "technologies,

protocols, and databases that synchronized the machinery of the real estate and

banking industries with the mystical calculus of racial, ethnic, and class

hierarchies."[164] As David M. P. Freund posits, the FHA's policies "promoted the

expansion of a particular kind of suburban growth focused on the automobile-

centered subdivision of single-family homes and secured almost exclusively for white

people."[165] The racialization of urban space was an explicit project of the state during

this period, ultimately giving birth to a market "that created more wealth for whites

while providing a state-sanctioned platform for housing experts to argue that racial

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[163] There is an extensive literature on this practice. See, for instance, George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011). 9-12. David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). For more in how this played out in New York City's history specifically, see Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. 59; Liz Sevcenko, "Making Loisaida," in *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York*, ed. Agustín Laó-Montes and Arlene Dávila (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). 295.
[164] Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. 62.
[165] Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America*. 100.

discrimination was simply a by-product of impersonal economic processes," providing another example of Woods' community invisibility.[166]

Central to this process in New York City was Robert Moses, who emerged during this period as the primary mind behind the city's urban development and who was no friend to the city's African-American and Puerto Rican residents. During the 1930s he built 255 parks in the city; only one of these was in Harlem. The rest of the city's predominantly African-American or Puerto Rican neighborhoods were passed over entirely.[167] During this same period, Moses embarked on his "genuine slum clearance" initiative, which razed whole blocks of the city's tenements with the stated intention of building new, better housing projects for residents.[168] With funding secured under Title I of the Federal Housing Act of 1949, this urban renewal initiative instead saw the eviction and displacement of tens of thousands of low- and moderate-income families, with numbers estimated at upwards of 320,000. Of these, a vastly disproportionate number were African American and Puerto Rican.[169] The result was that these displaced families shuttled from project to project, crowding in with other families. Caro writes:

> Crowd as they would into slums, there would not be enough room in the slums for them. So they would move into areas adjacent to the slums, into areas in which landlords, without incentive to keep up their property anyway because of the slums' proximity, would see an opportunity for financial profit and take it by breaking up large apartments into small and by cutting down on maintenance and repairs. The slums would spill over their boundaries, spreading into blocks as yet untouched by blight. Moreover, some slum dwellers hounded from their homes would flee into "soft" areas of the city such as Brownsville, neighborhoods in

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[166] Ibid. 115.
[167] Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York.* 511.
[168] Ibid. 611.
[169] Ibid. 968.

which there were a large number of vacancies. These vacancies would now be filled by the dispossessed of the ghetto.[170]

Over the next decade or so, movement of the city's lowest-income residents into so-called "soft" areas put additional pressure on these communities, and contributed to a period of full-fledged "white flight" in many neighborhoods. Meanwhile, Black and Latino neighborhoods continued to be undermined by "redevelopment" efforts.

Robert O. Self suggests:

> Black residents of the oldest neighborhoods in American cities were forced to assert their right to participate in decisions that affected the immediate material conditions of their lives, and often to defend their right not to be relocated. At the same time, however, because mainstream white political culture linked African American neighborhoods ipso facto with decay, residents were compelled to profess over and over again that urban blight was not a condition of black life per se […] within a 1950s culture of race dominated by white assumptions that the continued migration of southern African Americans to northern cities was a *cause* of urban decline.[171]

Now not solely contained to public housing projects, these "soft" areas' problems were severely exacerbated by the fiscal crisis of the 1970s and the effect it had on city governance. Many scholars have identified this historical moment as the origin of New York City's neoliberalization. Shrinking employment opportunities, including shipping and stevedoring, manufacturing, and construction; large-scale disinvestment; and the city's housing debacle all contributed to a reduction in New York City's population from 7.9 million residents in 1970 to 7.1 million in 1980. Even as the labor market was shrinking, however, unemployment jumped from under

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[170] Qtd. Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. 60.
[171] Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). 144.

five percent in 1970 to 12% by 1975.[172] Commercial banks, which had been

underwriting city development and municipal maintenance for years, suddenly grew

wary of receiving returns on their lending and, needing to ensure their own liquidity,

essentially ceased provision of all private capital through the purchase of municipal

bonds following the Urban Development Corporation's default on its debt in 1975.

When New York City appealed to the U.S. government for short-term federal loan

guarantees, Secretary of the Treasury William Simon saw his opportunity to

dismantle Keynesian economic and social policy. According to Joshua Freeman:

> New York civic liberalism, Simon believed, had shaped the national "philosophy
> of government" to the country's woe. Making an object lesson of New York could
> serve as a national curative for overly generous social programs and attendant
> fiscal irresponsibility. Any federal aid to New York, Simon testified in October
> 1975, should be on terms "so punitive, the overall experience made so painful, that
> no city, no political subdivision would ever be tempted to go down the same
> road."[173]

Indeed, the debate over the civic liberalism Simon and other U.S. federal officials

found so offensive had developed explicit class, racial, and ethnic contours. *New

York Times* reporter Fred Ferretti made this connection explicit in May of 1975,

writing that Simon's and other officials' resistance was "largely grounded in the view

that the city was a haven for 'welfare cheats' (read that 'lazy niggers'), people with an

overabundance of *chutzpah* (read that Jews), for 'minorities who want a free ride'

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[172] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. 256.
[173] Ibid. 259. This would ultimately become the International Monetary Fund/World
Bank rationale as well, extending neoliberal market reforms to nations throughout the
global south. In this way, New York City really is the crucible of neoliberalization.

(read that Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics), for arrogant smart-asses who don't give a damn about the rest of the country."[174]

In response to the federal government's refusal to help, the city devised a strategy that would allow it access to funds it needed to avoid bankruptcy: the creation of the Municipal Assistance Corporation. The New York State Legislature granted this quasi-public agency, comprised largely of high-powered representatives from the financial industry, the authority to issue bonds and oversee the city's expense budgets and short-term borrowing plans.[175] The agency further held direct control over the city's sales and stock transfer taxes.[176] This represented a substantial shift, giving the city's financial leaders unprecedented power over the city's governance. Within a few months, the city laid off thousands of municipal employees.

The years between 1975 and 1980 saw the systematic shift from "people welfare," to use David Harvey's characterization, to "corporate welfare."[177] Even as the financial industry got to arrange the terms of its own future growth, 25,000 city workers were laid off, and 60,000 more jobs were trimmed, largely through retirements. Wages were frozen. Municipal services—including sanitation, transit, education, police, and fire protection—were slashed, with those services located in the outer boroughs frequently redistributed to Manhattan. Resistance to these measures, though widespread, was unable to stem the tide of cuts, and by all accounts

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[174] Qtd. Ibid. 260.
[175] Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. 102.
[176] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. 261.
[177] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 47.

union and labor gains made over the prior thirty years were summarily undone in a matter of a few years. Low- and moderate-income communities, particularly those the STARS girls would soon be born into, were hardest hit by these cuts. Freeman suggests that everyday life "became grueling and the civic atmosphere turned mean."

The Blackout of 1977 highlighted for the nation the dystopian quality the city held for its poorest residents. Looting started within minutes, particularly in many of those neighborhoods that bore the brunt of Moses' urban renewal efforts decades earlier; East Harlem, downtown Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Bushwick in Brooklyn all saw fires and looting. President Jimmy Carter's surprise visit to the South Bronx turned that neighborhood into the national objective correlative for urban blight. Rather than assist these communities, however, city policy, largely

Figure 11: Untitled
The South Bronx, 1970s[178]

Figure 12: "Bathgate Avenue"
The South Bronx, 1970s[179]

at the hands of Robert Starr, the city's housing and development administrator, followed a program of "planned shrinkage":

Starr suggested that the city follow the lead of private capital and walk away from Brownsville, the South Bronx, and other troubled areas, reducing police and fire

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[178] Mel Rosenthal, *In the South Bronx of America,* Duke University.
[179] Ibid.

service and shuttering schools, hospitals, and subway stations to let whole stretches of the city "lie fallow until a change in economic and demographic assumptions makes the land useful once again."[180]

Race and class conflate here explicitly with geographic and economic use-value. Starr could hardly be clearer about his equation of African-American and Puerto Rican presence with blight. While most city officials publicly decried this plan, the movement in policy toward public investment, "tax relief," and economic development of the financial and business portions of Manhattan at the expense of the outer boroughs suggests otherwise. As neighborhoods continued to languish, most of those who could leave did. In addition to these neighborhoods' white residents, most middle-income and working-class residents of color also moved elsewhere, most commonly to suburbs in Long Island, New Jersey, and Westchester County.[181] The result of these processes was a state-sanctioned racializing of geography. By the 1970s, "in the minds of urban residents, as in the practices of public authorities, racial and class identities had become firmly conflated with space. And for African-Americans […], *where* you lived had become as important as *how* you lived in the figuring of black class identities and opportunities."[182]

It is not coincidence, but rather a central commitment of the new neoliberal regime, that while targeted programs of financial neglect and exclusion were weakening low-income communities, particularly low-income communities of color, policy-makers were "rebranding" New York City. The financial elite, who now wielded significant power, were the primary engine behind this endeavor, reshaping

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[180] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. 277.
[181] Sevcenko, "Making Loisaida." 295.
[182] Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. 66.

everything from New York's restored image as the home of cultural and artistic production—a clean and safe site for tourism—to the contours its employment landscape would take. As Harvey suggests, "investment bankers restructured the city economy around financial activities, ancillary services such as legal services and the media (much revived by the financialization then occurring), and diversified consumerism (gentrification and neighborhood 'restoration' playing a prominent and profitable role)."[183] By the early 1980s, New York City was once again solvent, even entering a period of rapid growth. This recovery was driven almost solely by the FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate) and service sectors. Manufacturing, industrial, and trade jobs continued to decline, while banking, securities, legal services, consulting, and accounting jobs increased by 180,000 between 1977 and 1989. Meanwhile, the tourism, entertainment, and culture industries added 68,000 jobs.[184] New York City's reinvention of itself as a global city meant that, as Doreen Massey and Saskia Sassen have argued, there were increasing numbers of highly educated residents to fill the increasing number of higher skilled and higher paid "service industry" jobs. As the city expanded its employment capacity in the arenas of finance, accounting, consulting, and law, it retracted its capacity in the arenas of manufacturing and other manual work. This shift in ideological alignment is reflected in the allocation of resources and spending priorities in the years that followed. Despite a 26% increase in real spending in the city budget, few of these dollars were allocated to public services and social programs for those communities most in need—those communities that had been targeted by "planned shrinkage."

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[183] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 47.
[184] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. 293.

Instead, in line with the significant restructuring of ideological commitments, those funds went primarily to promoting private development. Setting the structure that would come to dominate New York City development policy for nearly three decades to follow, Mayor Edward Koch's administration deployed tax incentives, developer-friendly zoning policies, and land use subsidies to encourage the private development Harvey refers to as "diversified consumerism".[185] Neighborhoods like the Lower East Side, with its proximity to other newly gentrified neighborhoods like Soho and Greenwich Village, became highly desirable to developers, who soon targeted it for development. Here, neighborhood activists and organizers were key in instituting ground-up counter-branding, effectively stemming the development tide for the Lower East Side's working-class Puerto Rican residents through the late 1990s, if not into the new millennium. Yet in the end, other neighborhoods, less appealing to private developers, followed a different trajectory.

Low- and moderate-income communities like the South Bronx; Harlem and East Harlem in Manhattan; huge swaths of Brooklyn, including Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Bushwick, East New York, Crown Heights, and Coney Island; and South Jamaica, Corona-East Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights in Queens were ravaged during the 1980s by the crack cocaine epidemic, mass incarceration, a rise in homelessness, and the AIDS epidemic.[186] During this period the income gap between the upper class and, to use Freeman's term, "everyone else" grew. A government study from the mid 1990s—the decade during which the STARS girls

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[185] Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community.* 103.
[186] For more on this, see Maher, *Sexed Work: Gender, Race, and Resistance in a Brooklyn Drug Market.*

were born—found that in the first half of that decade low-income New York families saw very little income growth and middle-income families even less, while the income of upper-income families increased by a third. Wall Street, now the city's primary financial engine, employed less than five percent of the city's work force, but accounted for over half the increase in aggregate earnings between 1992 and 1997.[187] This played out in very real ways for the families of the STARS girls and others like them. While Wall Street experienced a sharp growth in earnings, there was an attendant rise in the number of poor working families (an increase of 80% in the 1990s alone). By 1998 (the latest date for which poverty estimates are available), nearly one in every four city residents (1.8 million people) lived below the federal poverty income level—then $16,665 for a family of four.[188] In 1977 the top 10% of New York earners made 15 times the income of the bottom 10%. By the fall of 2012, the wealthiest fifth of Manhattanites made more than 40 times what the lowest fifth reported. As the *New York Times* observed, "the income gap in Manhattan, already wider than almost anywhere else in the country, rivaled disparities in sub-Saharan Africa."[189]

As the city's professional class grew in size and in income, gentrification drove housing costs skyward. Meanwhile, during the 1980s and 1990s the low-rent housing market contracted. From 1978 to 1987 the city lost 57,000 rental units. According to one study, between 1996 and 1999, rents for unregulated apartments in

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[187] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. 328.
[188] Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. 265-6. See 262-270 for more on this inequality.
[189] Sam Roberts, "Income Data Shows Widening Gap Between New York City's Richest and Poorest," *The New York Times*, September 20 2012. A22.

gentrifying neighborhoods increased by an average of 43.2%.[190] An estimated 8,300

and 11,600 households per year were displaced between 1989 and 2002, largely due

the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey, which does not include displaced

households that left the city, doubled up with other households, became homeless, or

entered the shelter system—practices common among low-income residents with few

available alternatives, including many of the STARS girls.[191] And, perhaps most

vividly illustrating the relationship between "greed and need," during this same

period, a sharp decline of 26% in the share of low-cost rental units tracked a sharp

increase of the same percentage in the share of high-cost rental units; very expensive

units increased even more sharply, by 30%.[192]

When the national economy was beginning to be driven by the housing bubble

and gentrification was displacing poor residents in favor of high-income home

owners, African-American families continued to be denied housing loans. The

Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company of New York turned down 43% of mortgage

applications submitted by high-income Blacks, versus 19% from high-income

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[190] Lance Freeman and Frank Braconi, "Gentrification and Displacement in New York City in the 1990s," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70, no. 1 (2004). 51. This article suggests that gentrification is more a process of normal succession (that is, residents moving out by choice and being replaced by residents of similar socio-economic status) than of displacement. For challenges to that argument, see Kathe Newman and Elvin K. Wyly, "The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City," *Urban Studies* 43, no. 1 (2006). See also Jason Hackworth, "Postrecession Gentrification in New York City," *Urban Affairs Review* 37, no. 6 (2002).
[191] Newman and Wyly, "The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City."
[192] Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo.* 267. See also Loretta Lees, "Super-Gentrification: The Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City," *Urban Studies* 40, no. 12 (2003).

whites.[193] Despite this, however, New York City had its fair share of the predatory

lending practices—primarily in the form of adjustable rate mortgages—that brought

about what some have termed "The Great Recession." According to a 2009 report by

the Fiscal Policy Institute:

> Within New York City it is clear that predatory lending practices that have led to very high foreclosure rates were concentrated in neighborhoods where the majority of residents are people of color. According to an analysis by the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, 88 percent of census tracts in New York City considered at the highest risk of foreclosure and destabilization are more than 90 percent non-white. Most of these at-risk neighborhoods of color are in Queens and Brooklyn.[194]

The story that emerges from this mass of data is one of severe and increasing

structural inequality, engendered in large part through the systematic impoverishment

of low-income communities of color in the interest of creating a city conducive to the

knowledge and finance production by business elite and service industry

professionals.[195] Indeed, New York City is not just, as Mayor Bloomberg has

referred to it, "the greatest city in the world" with a few lingering problems of

inequality. Rather, the mechanisms that make New York appear so successful to the

city's business elite and the managerial class—including policy-makers and criminal

justice system professionals—are the very same ones that drive inequality among the

city's working and low-income classes.[196] The majority of these mechanisms—race

and place-based policing strategies, educational access, and access to employment—

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[193] Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting Culture Wars in Urban America*. 93.
[194] Fiscal Policy Institute, "New York City: A Tale of Two Recoveries," (New York City2009). 18.
[195] For more on this process, and its affect on the character of neighborhoods, see Sharon Zukin et al., "New Retail Capital and Neighborhood Change: Boutiques and Gentrification in New York City," *City & Community* 8, no. 1 (2009).
[196] Massey, *World City*. 62-3. See also Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*.

are detailed in the following chapter. STARS girls' photos documenting

"community," however, reveal some of how these mechanisms manifest themselves

in the built environment and in geographically situated discourses, as well as how

these girls are active agents in spatial production.

Girls' Interior Spaces as Challenges to Individualism and the "Culture of the Bedroom"

The area in which girls are perhaps most clearly resisting spatial discipline is in the

context of their bedrooms. The study of girls' interior spaces—which, more often

than not, translates into studies of their bedrooms—is one of the central tropes of

cultural studies' early work on girlhood. Drawn from work pioneered by Angela

McRobbie and Jenny Garber, in this incarnation girls' "culture of the bedroom," a

designation coined by Simon Frith, centered around "experimenting with make-up,

listening to records, reading the mags, sizing up boyfriends, chatting, jiving."[197]

Picking up the notion of the culture of the bedroom, albeit with some modification to

allow for girls' productive energy and creative resistance to commodification and

materialism, Mary Celeste Kearney suggests that "with little time and disposable

income to invest in […] youth cultures, working-class girls more often involve

themselves in recreational activities within their homes…. Indeed, despite the broad

proliferation of femiminst ideologies over the past three decades, the cultural

experiences of most poor girls today are virtually the same as those studied by

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[197] Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, "Girls and Subculture," in *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1976). 213.

McRobbie and Garber in the 1970s."[198] While this is doubtless true for the subset of girls Kearney worked with, for Natalia, Cherrie, Jessie, and Maribel—all low-income, urban girls of color—the reflexive reliance on the bedroom as "safe space" and alternative to external youth cultures was considerably more complicated. As I explored in the previous chapter, in their own estimations girls' homes are sites of competing messages and experiences, more often than not sources of girls' isolation and objectification.

The STARS girls' rooms reflect a clear intention to mark territory and assert subjectivity. In homes where there were often two or three children to a room (Natalia), or where girls' rooms were in only partially finished basements (Maribel), or where they shared space with their children (Jessie), their decorating efforts can and should be read in the manner Soja suggests: a changing and reconfiguration of space "to increase the positive or decrease the negative effects" of these environments, drawn out of "conflicting purposes, competing forces, and contentious political actions for and against the status quo."

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[198] Mary Celeste Kearney, *Girls Make Media* (New York: Routledge, 2006). 67.

Figure 13: Maribel's Bedroom at her
Grandfather's House
"My room."

Figure 14: Maribel's Living Room at her
Grandfather's House
"Living rm to use PC."
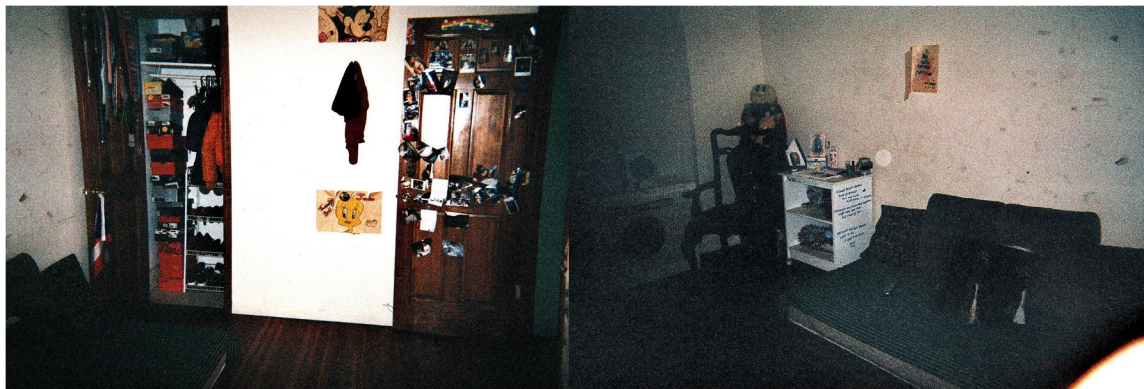
Figure 15: Natalia's Bedroom

Figure 16: Natalia's Bedroom

Figure 17: Jessie's Bedroom
"pics 1-4 my room all the pics"

Figure 18: Jessie's Bedroom
"pics 1-4 my room all the pics"

Figure 19: Jessie's Bedroom
"pics 1-4 my room all the pics"

Figure 20: Jessie's Bedroom
"pics 1-4 my room all the pics"

Recalling girls' complex interactions with family and the vexed nature of "home" as such, their bedrooms as spaces inside these homespaces assumed complicated contours. Rooms were not just spaces where these girls practiced being women, nor were they spaces where girls combated consumer culture or mainstream constructions of girlhood through the creation of alternative forms of media. They were spaces where a different sort of identity construction and knowledge production occurred. Religious figurines, family photos, and popular-culture images share wall space in a kind of bricolage; window coverings are always drawn; and each space serves multiple purposes. Here, girls' connections of childhood are laid bare,

145

reminding us how young they are to be treated as the system treats them. Describing Figure 16, Natalia explained, "I share this room with my sister. This is my bed. The card on the wall is from my dad, and my sister did the writing on the table." The "writing" Natalia describes is a poem, the first stanza of which reads: "A good heart is always broken/But our time hurt just makes us strong." This text, which stresses the centrality and value of struggle, gestures toward girls' efforts to make sense of the abuse and betrayals they experienced at home and elsewhere. It simultaneously serves as both an announcement and a reminder of girls' active role in shaping a narrative around these experiences of being "broken" such that they are not simply passive victims, but active survivors who are "strong." It also glances at the cultural value of "independence." Likewise the rainbow with stars that occupies the center-top portion of the door and the Puerto Rican flag hanging from Natalia's closet doorknob (Figure 15). The flag and stars sign is Natalia's material celebration of her identity as a bisexual Latin Queen, and mirrors a tattoo she has. It and the flag are further a "claiming" of these identities—and membership in these communities—to herself, her sister, and to those who enter her room. In the context of her family, where her sexuality is at times referred to derisively, this is an important act of resistance to the heteronormativity that pervades her homelife, and the active homophobia evinced by some members of her family and larger community.[199] Her display of the Puerto Rican flag illustrates the importance of her ethnic heritage to her identity, but its proximity to the flag and stars is a reminder that each is merely one facet of her complex being.

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[199] Many of the STARS girls who identified as "AGs" integrated the gay pride flag in some way into their daily attire, including t-shirts, belts, shoes, earrings, and tattoos.

Central to girls' identity construction was the visual representation of family and friends. Girls' rooms were filled with photographs of the important people in their lives—crumpled ones taped to the walls, others hung up or displayed on dressers or shelves in frames, still others tucked behind other mementos, a practice they share with millions of other women and children. Jessie's walls were adorned with countless photos of her daughter and her boyfriend, as well as her "homegirl and other best friends." Her walls also showcased many of her daughter's art projects (Figures 17-20). In addition to the card from her father and her sister's poem, Natalia's room also displayed "cartoon drawings I did based on cards I got from my dad while he was locked up. On my door there are pictures of my mom and dad, and baby cousin." Her qualifying phrase here, "while he was locked up," gestures stoward the spatialization of time and memory. Maribel's bedroom was mostly clear of these kinds of personal affects, in large part because of her near-constant movement between houses during the four years preceding our work together. Nonetheless, even she had two collages with pictures of her family and friends (Figure 13). The presence—and sheer number—of photographs serves as a reminder and assertion of *identity in relation*: friend, daughter, aunt, mother, girlfriend. Counter to neoliberal dogma, and even girls' narratives, which often stress their isolation and independence, and dominant criminal justice discourses that stress their aberation or essentional "other"ness, girls rooms—both their presence in the homes of their extended families and their decoration—reveal how enmeshed girls are in vital and mutli-facteded relationships, and how central these identities-in-relation are to

girls' senses of themselves. Further, they illuminate some of the "competing forces" or discourses at work within and around these relationships and identities.

From belonging to gangs to auto clubs to intimate partnerships to children and families, girls cherished and displayed those facets of their identities that indicate community and group belonging, often because this presentation counter-balanced the competing force of their physical isolation from their families in their everyday lives. While isolation was often a strategic response to the abuse each encountered in their homes, this presence of identity-in-relation in girls' built environments suggests the degree of ambivalence surrounding that strategy. Each girl had a television and VHS player in her room, which she would watch in solitude, away from other family members. Natalia said that she and her family all ate in their separate spaces, even when they made a communal dinner. Jessie's experience was similar, in that she and her daughter often spent the majority of their time in the physical space of her room. She explained that she had essentially tried to turn it into a separate living space, with only the kitchen as communal, family space. Her prior experience of having lived with her daughter and her daughter's father at the age of 13 meant that she had already experienced autonomy from parental control in her living space (albeit replaced with intimate partner control): "I've lived alone already, so I know how it feels being away from that." Her solution to this tension was to turn her room into her respite from her family, as many girls did. Recall her statement to her mother: "Leave me alone. That's how I am. I just don't like to be bothered. It's just you do you in your room. I do me in my room." Maribel, likewise, said she spent the majority of her time at home in her room, particularly given the emotional distance

she felt from her grandfather. Having her own TV and video games in her room meant she only needed to be in the living room when she had to use the computer for school or for work for the STARS program (Figure 14). This she avoided as much as possible, as she—like Natalia and Jessie—described feeling watched and judged by her step-grandmother and grandfather.

Girls' rooms assert their existence as distinct individuals with complex inner lives, and confound stereotypes of them as delinquents or anti-social. All of their rooms display cartoon characters, as pictures, figurines, and stuffed animinals (Elmo, Mickey Mouse, and Carebears for Maribel; Tweety Bird and Mickey Mouse for Natalia; and Winnie-the-Pooh characters and Spongebob Squarepants for Jessie), visual reminders of their temporal proximity to childhood. Different girls' rooms also display religious iconography, World Wrestling Federation paraphanelia, plaques with self-help messages, and images of themselves as children. These are juxtaposed against the pictures of them and their friends on the walls, sometimes throwing gang signs. Girls work—through the materials they display and the activities they partake of in their most intimate spaces—to assert a complex, multi-faceted identity against the objectification with which they are bombarded outside those spaces (e.g. "whore," "slut," "drug addict," "lazy," "criminal," "hood rat").

"Inside"/"Outside" Discourse
Perhaps the most explicit tie between the spatial and the social was the girls' use of spatialized descriptors—"inside" and "outside"—to denote an entire constellation of behaviors and beliefs of those peers who "be in the street," a logic whose reach

stretched into almost every aspect of their lives.[200] This was the defining peer-level discourse that affected how girls thought about themselves and the options available to them, and was almost always a factor in their decision-making.

As Stephanie explained, people who "be outside" "obviously aren't thinking ahead about college or stuff like that. They value the streets. Street money—getting fast money." So much so, in fact, that "[t]hey're willing to risk going to jail." Young people who "be outside" tend to congregate in public spaces, including fast food restaurants, parks, and areas in front of public housing. Girls included these spaces in their photos, to the degree they felt safe doing so, and were in complete accord as to the commitment of this cohort to money and its acquisition through a variety of entrepreneurial enterprises. In fact, this commitment, even if only nominal, is one of the central orientations of those who are "outside." For those young people who "be outside" or "who be in the street," the ability to rapidly accrue capital is significantly more important than the specter of incarceration. Jessie explained:

> They don't care, and it's like, they feel gettin' street money—what they call easy money—is better than working nine to five. Because if you go on the street right now and sell drugs, you wouldn't want to work again. You would never want to work again. And that's anybody, guaranteed. If you start selling drugs you're gonna do it 'til you get caught. It's so easy you're never gonna want to work again. That's how they feel. I can understand that. We've all been down that road. It's just crazy.

"Fast money" is usually, for New York City's young people, acquired through hustling—in the form of dealing drugs, selling stolen goods (now almost exclusively

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[200] While this "inside" and "outside" nomenclature is, to my knowledge, specific to New York City, other scholars have noted similarly spatialized terminology among young people in other communities of color around the country, including "'hood," "ghetto," "corner," and "street." See, for instance, Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. and Jones, *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence*.

Apple-brand consumer electronics), being part of an "ENT" or entertainment team and throwing parties, or engaging in prostitution. In an odd reenactment of New York City's larger economic and employment landscape in an era of neoliberalization, all these forms of hustling are "service industry" forms of money-making.. All of the STARS participants had at one point or another been involved in fast money-making enterprises. Anaya and Nicole, for instance, detailed experiences dealing drugs at school. "People be like, 'Yo, B, what's good? What's good? You got a bag for me?' I'd be like, 'Come see me,' all on my hustle and shit," Anaya explained, laughing, during one of our group interviews. Not to be outdone, Nicole joined in, "I used to go to school and hustle, too." For Nicole and Anaya, the hustle connotes both entrepreneurialism and evidence of hard work. Like the American Dream through the glass darkly, hustling is at once a source of pride and a source of fatigue of being stuck in a shadow economy. Jessie engaged in prostitution with her group of friends. Like Anaya and Nicole, her posture toward hustling was enthusiastic and had an up-for-anything quality. "This is like just with me, all my friends, they call me, I'm with it. Before this, it was like, 'Oh, what you doing? I'm coming. Come get me. I'm there.' And it was like, 'I'm with it. I'm down for whatever.'" Maribel and Malika were both part of teams that threw parties, and Natalia's brother was as well. Natalia explained one of her experiences of "being on [her] hustle" thusly:

> My brother's ENT was throwing a party and I was selling the tickets. You know if you hustle you get more money. It was supposed to be $15 but I was taking $35, right? Everybody was tight that they had to pay $20 when they already had a ticket. But I was like, "Too bad. I already spent your money on a pack of cigarettes and food, so you ain't getting your money back." Everybody was tight.

Natalia's experience demonstrates the multi-layered quality of the hustle. There is both the original hustle, Natalia's brother's ENT and selling tickets to one of their events. Then there's Natalia's secondary hustle, charging too much money for tickets and spending the proceeds on personal items. Fast money was widely understood to be the easiest way to generate income, however vexed.

Intimately connected to the ability to amass capital quickly was the importance among those who were "outside" of creating an appearance of wealth. Whether through clothing, shoes, or electronics, the STARS girls—who universally resided in low-income and working-class communities—told stories of feeling pressure to convey an image of wealth or conspicuous consumption through their appearance. This was accomplished, usually, with the grudging assistance of parents or guardians, who had to balance financial realities with their children's or kins' social realities.

> Anaya: My mother was like, "Payless." I'm like, "Mom, come on. I want some Nikes."
>
> Nicole: My mom would be all, "Here's $50. Go get you some sneakers." I'd be like, "$50? What I'm gonna do with that?" I'd have to cry, have a little break down. Then I'd get it.
>
> Anaya: One day I was like, "Mom, I'm tired of these Payless. I gotta get some Nikes."
>
> Nicole: I remember my mother got me some Skechers. Even though they was poppin' for y'all, I was like, "Oh, you must be kidding." I just left them in the projects.
>
> Anaya: Nah, so one day I was like, "Ma, if you don't give me no Nikes I'm not going to school for like 10 days. I am so serious."
>
> Elise: And when you say people look at you a certain way if you don't have [brand name] shoes, what do you think they're thinking?

Nicole: You a bum.

Anaya: Yeah, like poor. I got teased a lot back in the day. Then I came in with my grey and whites and oh, I was good. They was like, "Oh, she got a pair of Nikes."

One one hand, this would be recognizable teen behavior in most any U.S. social location. On the other, this discussion highlights the ways in which this particular subset of youth had adopted and performed the post-Fordist emphasis on consumption and display of wealth. The transactional nature of Anaya's threat of truancy if her mother doesn't buy her a pair of Nike's is particularly indicative of the adoption of neoliberal norms. Among the STARS participants, nearly all had Blackberry and Sidekick "PDAs" at a time when very few non-professionals owned them for personal use.

When speaking of consumption practices of urban youth of color, there is a danger of falling prey to dominant discourses that, as Elizabeth Chin suggests, "consistently portray as pathological the ways in which poor minority youth enter and participate in the consumer sphere."[201] STARS girls experiences illustrate the degree to which their consumption is, first, a reflection of the larger neoliberal system that developed beginning in the 1970s, which intentionally established, to again use Harvey's term, "diversified consumption" and its commitments to consumption and wealth-acquisition.[202] Second, even when girls were participating in this discourse

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[201] Elizabeth Chin, *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). 48.
[202] There is, of course, also an attendant relationship between consumption, luxury, and the politics of respectability in African American cultural history. Though it is beyond the scope of this project to trace in depth, see for instance, Monica L. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2009); Michael McCollum, *The Way We Wore:*

and practice of fast money and consumption, they were ambivalent about the actual value of the goods they possess, as well as the act of appearing to throw around money. Recall Natalia's feelings about her phone: "I used to fiend for a Sidekick 'cause everybody else had it. Now I want to throw it out the window." Girls described routines of caution and constraint in their purchasing, where their needs were weighed alongside their responsibilities. With the exception of Cherry, who said she purchased clothes and shoes several times a week, Jessie, Natalia, and Maribel all said they bought things for themselves only every once in a while. When it came to her needs versus her daughter's, Jessie explained:

> Me now, having a child, it's like, how can you neglect your child? You gotta take care of that. If she, that baby, asks for food—you carried her for nine months. Not even nine, ten. My daughter gets everything before I do. She has 7, 8, 9 pairs of sneakers. I've been wearing the same pair of sneakers for God knows how long. But it's just that my daughter comes first. And if you're having a child, that's how it should always be.

Many girls had to weigh their own needs against those of the people providing them with money. Maribel, for instance, was given a small monthly stipend, from which she had to purchase all her personal products, including clothing, toiletries, and food. The idea of buying shoes on a monthly basis—the frequency with which some other girls purchased new shoes—was shocking to her. When she considered asking other family members for help, she was aware that they had responsibilities of their own

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Black Style Then (New York: Glitterari Press, 2006); Kelefa Sanneh, "Harlem Chic: How a Hip-Hop Legend Remixed Name-Brand Fashion," *New Yorker*, March 25 2013; Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture, From Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Helen Foster Bradley, *"New Raiments of Self": African American Clothing in the Antebellum South* (New York: Berg, 1997).

that demanded their financial attention, and as a result, she sometimes went without lunch.

The drive toward consumption and the appearance of wealth present a particularly prominent double-bind for girls. On the one hand girls felt pressure to possess goods to avoid ridicule and gossip, and the physical violence that often resulted when girls felt pressed to defend their reputations and ability to command respect. As Anaya and Nicole detailed, girls who were unable to keep up with the latest trends were mocked by others for being "bum[s]" or "poor." Natalia explained that groups of girls would often jump one girl to steal phones or iPods, which she believed they did so that they could sell the stolen goods for money or because they could not afford to buy the products themselves.

On the other hand, once girls were in possession of these goods—whatever they were—girls had to resort to physical violence to maintain possession of them, to keep them in good shape, and to respond to other girls who wanted to fight because of the image they projected. When, in one group interview, I inquired about the genesis of the fights they described as so common, Jessie replied emphatically, "Gossip, and more gossip, and more gossip, and more gossip." "And jealousy," Cherry added. "Yeah, and jealousy," Jessie agreed. When I asked why other girls were jealous, Jessie told me, "They want what you got, they mad 'cause you better than them, or they mad 'cause the boy they like talking to you. It's all gossip and jealousy. It's like, 'I'm not fighting you over this.'" Again, even while Jessie here links violence (and self worth) to material possession and reputation, she reveals her own ambivalence about the consumption at the root of these altercations and its meanings. And then

the girls themselves were in the role of aggressor as well as victim. Speaking of jumping other girls for their iPhones, Natalia observed, "There's a lot of pressure to do it," she added. The pressure she refers to here is both pressure to possess the products and to engage in robberies to garner that possession. This scenario had become so common among teenage girls, in fact, that robbery, burglary, and assault were the charges faced by more than 90% of the STARS girls during the year-and-a-half I conducted my research with the program participants.[203]

The dove-tailing of consumption and violence in peer discourse is apparent throughout girls' narratives. The following passage reveals the ways that fast money and consumption practices intersect with violence. I include in its entirety so that the nuances and commonplace nature of these discourses is evident.

Nicole: I ain't messing with no parties [at the Elks Plaza], not after that girl got shot. The Elks? I mean, I been there, but I don't go there no more.

Jessie: I don't party too much, though, 'cause of course I have a daughter.

Nicole: You know why I don't like to party? I mean, I party, but it's like, every time I go to a party it get shut down, and it be a waste of my $15, 'cause that's how much I be paying. It's either $10 or $15. If you get there past a certain time, it's $15. It go up.

Jessie: That's why I love partying with the auto club. Because there's no fights break out, no shoot-outs, nothing.

Natalia: But there's always drama.

Jessie: It might be a little drama within, but it never, like, escalates to a higher level. It's always squashed.

Nicole: If I'm going to a Bronx party, I gotta go with somebody traveling with a gun.

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[203] STARS Director of Research and Evaluation, Personal Communication, June 25 2012.

Jessie: You're going to a Bronx party, you better have a gun!

Nicole: That's what I just said. You heard what I just said, right? I gotta have—I can't say I got a gun or y'all come get me—but I got to go with somebody that got a gun in the car, because them Bronx niggas—they roll deep, and they crazy, and I would have to pop one of them and zoom off in one of my friend car.

Elise: What would this start over?

Jessie: Nothing!

Nicole: No-thing.

Jessie: You stepped on one of they sneakers, you pushed them.

Nicole: You looking at them wrong. Like, come on!

Elise: And then it goes right away to—right to a gun?

Jessie: 'Cause they be drunk.

Nicole: 'Cause half of the time they be deep.

Elise: What do you mean?

Nicole: When I say deep I mean they got more people than me, than I'm with, you feel me? I feel like, "They about to spank all of us. We gonna have to go out like fighters, son."

This lengthy excerpt demonstrates how quickly serious violence can arise over something as seemingly innocuous as someone's shoes being stepped on. Within the context of fast money and the emphasis on material goods, the implications are significant and nuanced. Nicole, who grew up in Brooklyn's Bedford-Steyvesant neighborhood, and Jessie, who grew up in the South Bronx, here readily agree that their vulnerability to *regular and unpredictable* violent altercations often necessitates the use of a gun. While they relish demonstrating their knowledge of the importance of self-protection and use of weapons, both girls also reveal their ambivalence about being involved in such incidents through their strategies for avoiding "drama." In

their initial discussion of where they "party," Nicole and Jessie are both very intentional about selecting a social and physical landscape that excludes physical danger: Nicole avoids the Elks, with its history of large-scale fighting and gunfights, and Jessie elects to hang out with an auto club because its members seldom engage in physical altercations. [204] Those fights that do arise are "squashed," or resolved, relatively quickly.

Fighting the Fair One

Rather than the super-predators or anti-social delinquents depicted in the popular and criminological literature, I suggest that these court-involved girls instead resorted to physical violence at times when they felt they must, simply to protect themselves or to try to avoid larger or potentially more dangerous alternatives. And, as I have described, those more dangerous alternatives were an intrinsic part of girls' larger peer communities, a part of the landscape of being "outside."

Girls were, on the one hand, frustrated and resentful of the fact that they had to constantly be on the alert to defend themselves against would-be attackers. On the other hand, they often lauded their own victories. Fights between peers were an acknowledged method of conflict resolution, much as they were within girls' families. Many girls were taught about the importance of fighting—and winning—by their mothers. Jessie's mother, she said, always told her, in a classic double bind:

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[204] The Elks Plaza is a nightclub in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, where youth-led ENT teams often hold their parties or events. It was renowned among the Brooklyn residents for its toughness and the regularity of violence. For more on this, particularly the shooting incident to which Nicole refers, see Michael Wilson and Flora Fair, "Girl, 17, Is Killed as Gunfire Fills a Club," *The New York Times*, January 19 2009.

"If you get beat up, I'm gonna beat you up." Even though I got bruised, you know, with my battles, she never beat me up. It was just a way like, "You know what? If you don't want to get beat up by me, you better take all your anger out on this girl. I don't want to hear nothing else about it." It was like, "Oh mom, she's bothering me. I—I"—and she's like, "You know what? Get it done and over with."

Jessie's experience buttresses Nikki Jones' findings in her study of Philadelphia neighborhoods that "mothers who encourage their daughters to become able fighters often believe they are passing on a lesson that is necessary for a girl's survival."[205] Just as parents and/or guardians ultimately agreed (whether enthusiastically or begrudgingly) to purchase their children's expensive clothing requests, parents often (again, whether enthusiastically or begrudgingly) recognized fighting as a necessary skill for their daughters to have in the communities in which they lived and, consequently, cultivated those skills.

In detailing their fights, however, most girls rhetorically place themselves in the role of the victim, and the other girl in the role of the aggressor. In a kind of David-and-Goliath narrative structure, girls were victors despite the odds, usually because they were fighting someone so much larger than themeselves. Take, for example, Maribel's description of one of her early fights:

I got into a fight and, I don't know how, I choked a girl. And the next thing I knew she was on the ground and I just kept stomping her. And blood was running down her face, but nobody stopped me, and I just kept hitting her. And then I was like, "Just shut up," and I just walked away, but she was still trying to talk shit.

While she describes in detail the level of brutality of her response, by noting the fact she does not "know how" she choked her opponent, and by concluding, "she was still

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[205] Jones, *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence*. 29. See also Ness, "Why Girls Fight: Female Youth Violence in the Inner City."

trying to talk shit," Maribel seeks to justify her actions as both beyond her control and

necessary in the face of her opponent's verbal aggression. Moreover, Maribel's

qualification that "nobody stopped" her further removes her own responsibility in the

act. In fact, this anecdote was followed, in our discussion, fairly quickly by Maribel's

story about her very first fight. Again, she was a victim of verbal aggression that she

saw no other way of ending, and resorted to fighting almost against her will.

> I remember my first fight; I was shaking. I didn't want to fight. And this girl
> wanted to fight me over a pen because I supposedly took her pen. She wanted to
> fight me over a *pen*. I'm like, "Yo, you could just get another one." She was like,
> "No, I want that one. I want that pen." Then after school she was talking mad
> shit. I was like, she pulled my hair from the back. And I just turned around and I
> hit her. And after that I just started fighting. And the next day she gave me a
> apology and said, "Oh, it was a good fight. A good fight." I'm like, whatever.

Jealousy, gossip, and verbal aggression, often based on appearance or

possessions, were the frames most girls employed in their descriptions of fights. In

this passage, Jessie moves fluidly from describing one fight to the larger socio-spatial

context that necessitated it.

> I used to fight the same girl every other day until one time I made her bleed, and
> then she just left me alone. She just left me alone. It was like—it was a constant
> battle for me just 'cause I grew up in the—in the 'hood. So, it was just, like, I
> was the only white girl. And then, like—and everybody always told me I was a
> white girl. And I was never around girls. I was always around guys. "Oh, she's a
> ho, she's a trick." I'm like, "Huh? What is that? I'm still a virgin. What?" […]
> And, like, I'm the only girl in my family. So, it's just my brothers and me. So, if
> you attack me, I'm gonna fight you back. What do you want me to do? But, you
> know, a little girl—oh, other people didn't see it that way. 'Cause like, I don't
> care how you see it. My mother knows what I'm doing.

Here, Jessie suggests that her violent behavior toward others is essential to her well-

being. In her mind, given that she could not use her mother as an intercessor (recall

her mother's position that Jessie should fight, and win, when confronted with a

problem), it is not until Jessie fought the girl who was making fun of her and "made

her bleed" that she succeeded in stopping the girl's aggressive behavior. Jessie, a light-skin Puerto Rican girl, was, in the eyes of her then-South Bronx community, "white," and as a result she became a target, perceived both as weaker and as "having more, thinking you better" than other, girls with dark(er) skin coloring. The racialized geography here intersects with a gendered discourse, to create an environment of hostile gossip and jealousy; these, in turn, leave Jessie feeling she must resort to violent action to avoid continued violence, or in her words "constant battle," in her community.

These patterns, developed in the context of specific socio-historical spatial relations have, in many cases, been expanded to the internet, the virtual spaces girls inhabit. Natalia described an incident she experienced on AOL Instant Messenger (AIM) where she was the victim of misinterpretation and jealousy that quickly escalated into "drama."[206]

> I put as my away message, "I'm just a dopestar spaz." Always. That's just my away message. [This other girl's] screen name is jluvsodope. That's it. So you gonna sit there and read my away message—mind you all it says is, "I'm having a boy. I'm so happy. I'm just a dopestar spaz and sleeping right now"—and you're gonna think I'm talking about you on my away message? She didn't even hit me up. She had something else hit me up from her screen name. She was like, 'Natalia, this is Dominique. You know I love you and all, but why you got jluv on your away message?' I'm like, "What are you talking about?" I said, 'Tell her that if she's stressing that and she's 25 years old, she's fucked up. It ain't even about her. Tell her to stop stressing it, stop reading my fucking away messages and pop off my shit." Sorry. Like, it pisses me off. It's unnecessary.

Here, Natalia's (much older) peer, who was dating her baby's father at the time, assumes her AIM away message is somehow referencing her and, consequently, lashes out in jealousy and in an effort to protect her property, her "man." Natalia

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[206] AIM is an acronym for AOL Instant Messenger, a popular method of communication for young people at the time this was written.

recognizes both the need to defend herself and the misunderstanding at the base of the exchange. As a result, she responds in kind, but her response includes the coding of her less-than-enthusiastic reception to the other girls' attempts at instigating conflict: "It's unnecessary." In person, this would most certainly have ended in a fight. In this instance, Natalia's strategy of physical isolation—of staying "inside"—was an effective one in avoiding physical confrontation.

This same sense of reluctant necessity animates girls' use of weapons, both in fighting and generally as they moved through the spaces of their communities. Stephanie described the commonplace nature of weapons among teenagers thusly: " Teenagers don't fight anymore. Too many people have too much access to things. I guess I was one of them." These weapons, ranging from items as simple as rings or keys to guns, were perceived as guarantors of safety in the face of unavoidable violence and vulnerability. "A lot of these girls is big, huge. And I'm a little girl. I mean, in a fair fight either I'm gonna get knocked down or I'm gonna knock you down. But if you're big? I need something to help me knock you down." For the girls who participated in this study, "fighting the fair one" meant an altercation between two people with just the use of their fists, and was an alternative to employing weapons. Typically, a fair fight was announced at the outset of the engagement, with either the fighters or the onlookers letting all involved know, as Nicole explained, that "they 'bout to fight the fair one." The use of "fair" indicates the degree to which fear is tied to the "unfair" and unpredictable use of weapons. Jessie, after all, only sees the need for wearing rings when her opponent is significantly bigger than her. "There was this girl" she was fighting, she explained.

"I had my graduation ring and these other rings, and I put them all on my right hand and I was like 'Boom, boom, boom!' I had to. She was like 5'9"."

Fighting the fair one was seen as a bit of an outlier on the fighting spectrum, something that had to be announced rather than the assumed norm. Instead, girls relied on what they have come to understand as the necessity of weapons use. "My cousin is a girly girl," Maribel shared, by way of explaining the preparations for a more typical fight. "And she usually puts rings on her hand or something when she's gonna beat somebody up. Literally, and she stayed doing that when she gets in fights." "And Vaseline, to make your face slippery," Jessie added. "So it doesn't scratch you as much," Cherry chimed in. The common-place nature of this knowledge, and Maribel's use of the phrase "when she's gonna beat someone up" ("when" rather than "if") underscores the degree to which fighting has become normative.

Existing in the midst of this field, gangs both compel movement toward violence and provide respite from it. Sometimes the violence can be on the level of the family, for young people experiencing abuse or neglect at home. For others, the violence can be on the level of the community. Many of the STARS participants were in or had been in gangs. But, again, many felt conflicted about the benefits they received from these associations. Girls reported that, in their experience, most kids "want protection, or they come from a broken home and they want a family, and the gang becomes they family," as Jessie put it. Verbalizing another iteration of the logic-of-violence double-bind, she added, "but it's a family that might try to kill you." In Maribel's experience, "teens just do it to fit in or be over power, thinking they

better than everything else. And in case they get in a fight they be like, 'I got niggas that show up.'" Here, again, surfaces the desire to "roll deep," as Nicole said earlier, to have enough people who would support you in a fight that you could either win (thereby avoiding future victimization because of your perceived weakness) or, better yet, win so soundly that you might avoid re-challenges altogether.

The realities of gang life, however, often fell short of their promise for many STARS girls. "To me, every gang is pussy," said Jessie. "If you catch one gang member by himself, he won't do nothing until he goes and gets the rest of his crew. You're talking all this shit, why not take care of it yourself?" Maribel, a former gang member, agreed.

> I used to be in a gang when I was in my other school. But we had gotten jumped and roughed up. It was like 5 girls and 10 guys of our crew. And we was fighting some other crews. And then all the boys ended up running from our crew. And the girls was the ones trying to hold it down. And one of the girls was pregnant and she ended up losing the baby because of it. And afterward I was like, "This ain't what I want to be in." 'Cause if I seen one of them fighting, I'm gonna get in. But why would they run? That's when I was like, "This ain't what I want. I'm not gonna risk my life for something that's not even worth it." And boys is supposed to be tough, but the girls was the ones trying to hold it down. They was gone.

In Maribel's experience, her "crew" ultimately failed in its primary promise, providing protection, thereby violating the logic of those who "be outside" and proving Jessie's point that "every gang is pussy." Rather than continue participating in something that would place her in further danger with little benefit, Maribel opted (and was allowed) to be "jumped out" of the gang. In her case, she had to let her crew beat her up for the time it took the school elevator to go up its 6 stories and back down again (her punishment for acknowledging the double-bind the gang placed her

in).[207]

Peer discourses around fighting create another double-bind situation girls are forced to navigate: on the one hand, girls must fight to avoid becoming targets and being forced to endure ongoing attacks; on the other, once they do fight and win, then they are in a position to be challenged by others wanting to prove themselves. As Stephanie explained, "Everybody's scared to get their ass beat. Even if you won a fight you can't come outside because everyone wants to fight you. But on the other side you can't come out, either, if you lose." Michelle agreed. "Yeah! You say 'I don't feel good.'" Though a joke, Michelle's comment is another example of strategic shifting in response to a double-bind situation. While girls use weapons and have a collective knowledge about fighting procedures, they also feel very conflicted about, not to say wary of, having to fight at all. As a result, they resort to making the best available choice from an array of poor options.

The Prevalence of Random Attacks

In addition to maintaining constant vigilance for peer-related violence, girls also reported many incidents where they and their friends were randomly threatened or

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[207] An analysis of New York City's youth gang culture would have been a full dissertation in and of itself and is beyond the scope of this project. Unlike California, which has much more established and structured gang community, however, New York City has, in the last fifteen years or so, seen a proliferation of teams or crews with loose affiliations to the more well-known gangs like the Bloods, Crips, or Latin Kings. And in recent years, some of these gangs have no affiliations, growing out of the same crews and teams that start as ENTs. This is part of what makes policing youth culture challenging. Assuming criminality for all youth crews means mass criminalization of the majority of Black and Latino youth in New York City; assuming that all crews are merely social groups means overlooking a fair amount of "criminal" behavior, like robbery and assault.

attacked by unknown adults, and often when they were younger girls. Like peer

violence, random attacks were understood to be both regular and unpredictable.

These incidents emerged as fundamental to how girls understood their communities

(sites of danger and fear) and their roles within them (potential victims). Nicole tells

of an experience from a few years prior, when she was both propositioned and

menaced by an adult man.

> I was like 13 or something, and I was waiting for my friend in a building. And you're not supposed to talk to strangers, but I was just talking to [this man]. He was like, "What you doing?" I said, "Um, waiting for my friend." He's like, "What floor?" And I told him what floor, like an idiot. He's like, "Oh, my friend live on that floor. Let's go on the elevator together." So I'm like, "No, I'm good. I'm waiting for them down here. They're about to come downstairs." So then he pulls out money. "Come with me upstairs. My friend live on the 5th floor, too. We take a ride up, I give you $50." I look at him like, "Uh, I'm good." He pulled out $100. He kept pulling out money. But every time somebody came in the building he would leave. I kept noticing that. Every time he did that, I just stood in the building, even though something was telling me, "Leave, just leave." They would come in the building and he would go into the stairway and hide, but as soon as they got in the elevator he would come out again. So I'm looking at this dude, and I left. I just broke out.

By following her instincts, Nicole believes she was able to prevent herself from

having been raped. Her movement—away from—is also illustrative of girls' beliefs

that their communities were places to get out of rather than to feel at home in. And

the way that Robert Moses and his policy team constructed these public housing

developments post-World War II, based on the "Radiant City" presumption that

"community" can be engineered, ultimately exacerbates girls' vulnerability.

During a group conversation about their neighborhoods, girls had story after

story about would-be attackers they were able to thwart by chance or instinct.

Anaya's response to Nicole's experience (which, notably, also demonstrates the

pervasiveness of the "outside" discourse and its emphasis on easy money) is

suggestive of the girls' belief that they must always be on the defensive:

> I'd of took his money and *then* screamed, I can't lie. But I had one [incident of assault] when I was 5 and the other one was this drunk guy that thought he knew me. I was walking home from my friend house, and this drunk guy came at me. And I had my knife with me. You're not supposed to carry it because it's a gravity knife, and I leave it home now, but I had it on me. And this guy was like, "Oh, I know you,'" all in my face. And I said, "Yo, I don't know you, but if you don't back up right now were gonna have a problem." And then when the ambulance came I was like, "Oh, thank god." I was out.

For both Anaya and Nicole, after being aware of potentially being jumped by their peers, fear of gendered violence from adult men followed as the second most common concern of community-based violence. Jessie shared her induction into this shared knowledge:

> Like, rape is scary. The first time it happened it was a group of us. We were really young. And it was just us. And he came with his razor thingy and he attacked the smallest one. So she, and everybody, was freaking out, and he tried to snatch her. But we all ran around and she got away. But he just kept coming around, coming around. And one of my friend's dads took a picture of his license plate. And we took the pictures and called the police, and we had to go down to the police station and give a statement. And actually, we caught him.

Stephanie, meanwhile, felt that "particularly in the Bronx girls have to be kind of aware of their surroundings when it comes to—'cause it's like, a lot of people see girls as the easiest targets for like, crime. You know what I mean? Being raped, kidnapped, anything like that." These stories reveal a collective fear of the potential for being raped and suggest the operation of an additional community-level discourse that emphasizes girls as victims who must be protected, by their families and by the community at large.

Gendered Violence and Community Surveillance

Girls unanimously felt an acute sense of being targeted by men because of their sex

regardless of their gender performance. Some of this arose from their experiences of being attacked or threatened by unknown adult men. This sense of actual or threatened abduction and/or rape described above was a close cousin to a pervasive and universal experience of sexual harassment by the adult men in their communities. This creates another iteration of the logic-of-violence double-bind: girls were given the message that they needed to be protected, within a context (now family, romantic, and community) that often perpetrated the very thing they needed to be protected from. When girls didn't behave as expected—e.g., when girls asserted themselves as not sexually available—they were often objectified and subjected to verbal abuse, being called ugly or prostitutes (now yet another double-bind), or even physically assaulted.[208]

Often, girls explained, this attention came from men 10 to 40 years their senior. "Everywhere you walk there's some guy saying something mean to you or trying to, like grab your arm or talk to you," Stephanie explained. "Let's say you're walking by a guy and he's trying to talk to you and you ignore him. He's like, 'Oh, you think you're too good. You're not that cute anyway.' Something stupid like that." Girls see this gendered violence in the community as an extension of the physical and emotional violence they experience from male parents or family members and from intimate partners. Note the following exchange:

> Jessie: We're always getting harassed by men; you always hear about girls getting abused by their men, like their guys, or there's abuse in they house, like verbal abuse.

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[208] Artist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh's work has explored this experience, and responded to it publicly in Brooklyn neighborhoods Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick, Clinton Hill, and Williamsburg. For more, see Julie Turkewitz, "With Posters, Answering So-Called Compliments," *The New York Times*, March 2 2013.

Elise: When you say harassment by guys, what do you mean?

Nicole: Like if a guy try to holla and a girl try to front.

Anaya: Use words she know.

Nicole: Like if a guy is talking to a female, and he trying to get her number and the female don't want to and she's not trying to hear that and she keep walking. "Stupid, dumb bitch. F you, girl, you ugly anyway." Start talking mad bold.

Girls feel constantly under threat from these men, who assume and perform the right to address all women as sexually available. When girls do not respond as desired, they are disciplined through verbal assaults. This assertion of gendered power serves as another constant in girls' experiences of their communities. When I asked how often they felt like they were approached in this manner, Jessie responded, "Everyday!" Anaya added, "All the time!" Girls acknowledged that all instances of a guy "holla-ing" do not end in insults.

Jessie: It's not every guy that approaches you, 'cause some of them just brush it off, like, "Fine." But a lot of them, they be like, 'You think you too good.' A lot of men, they come up to you, 'Ma, yo ma!'[209]

Nicole: Yeah, like they grab you. I been through that before. They just grab me.

Jessie: Yeah, like 'Who you talkin' to?' Take it easy!

This constant sexualization by strange men, violation of which brings sharp disciplining through insults, threats, or actual assaults, creates a community-based

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[209] "Ma" here is a derivative of "mami." Though Spanish in origin, the term is now used widely in New York City by people from many different racial and ethnic groups when addressing women.

discourse in which girls are primarily, in their "correct" gender performance, constructed as passive sexual objects and vessels for male satisfaction.[210]

This fuels another construction of girlhood, one that posits girls as potential victims who must always look out for themselves (and, by extension, ultimately responsible for their own victimization). In response to the very real threats of peer violence and random violence from adults, as previously noted many girls opted to carry weapons, believing these made them safer. After a stalking incident with a boy at school, for instance, Cherry's dad gave her a knife to carry. Jessie "used to carry a boxcutter, a razor blade, and a pocketknife. The pocketknife was in my jeans, the boxcutter was in my bag." She described keeping weapons in multiple places in the event that she and her bag were separated during an attack. Maribel kept her knife on her keychain; Anaya carried a gravity knife; Nicole periodically carried a gun; and Stephanie carried a boxcutter. Here the cultural value of independence colludes with girls' social and spatial communities to create another logic-of-violence double-bind: girls' near-constant exposure to violence makes carrying a weapon a very real strategy for safety. If they have to use them—which is often the case, as we've seen—they are punished quite literally by the state if they are caught, and by others who will want to test them if they are not. In this way they are produced, by others and by themselves, as simultaneously vulnerable and dangerous.

Intersections of the Social and the Spatial

Girls' narratives and photos were full of historical "vibrations," to return to White's

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[210] Girls who identified as AG, as well girls who were more gender conforming, articulated this kind of objectification (see Nicole's comment, for instance).

metaphor, of community spaces where violence had occurred, either to themselves or to others. This conception of their neighborhoods was drawn fluidly from their own experiences of violence with known and unknown assailants; actual experiences of friends, family, and acquaintances; news stories; and community gossip and urban legends. These all bled together to create a discourse of vulnerability, and an environment in which girls felt that they had to be constantly aware of their surroundings to avoid violent altercations. The built environment reflected these experiences. Bullet-proof glass, abandoned lots, iron window-grates all communicated eloquently the assumed likelihood of danger. When I asked where girls felt the most safe, Jessie explained, "Safe? Not safe. Never. It's out of the question." "No," Maribel agreed. When I asked them to elaborate, Jessie replied, "Never. It's a shootout, or a fight, it's whatever. Please. I ain't never safe. […] You could die just walking down the street, you get hit by a car. […] There's a lot of people that rob people's houses."

Much of the sense of danger lies in the potential of being threatened or approached by other young people. Maribel explained that she feels safe in the immediate vicinity of her grandfather's apartment in the South Bronx "because I got people's back there. But like, around, my school, I don't feel safe there. It's a whole different territory. And they be jumping people where I go get the train over here, the 2 and the 3." For Malika, the danger presented by the intitial altercation itself was compounded by the fact that her (and the other STARS girls') participation in the ATI program often hinged upon them not being rearrested or violating any orders of protection. Malika explained that much of her reluctance to be "outside" in her

Brooklyn neighborhood stemmed from wanting to stay in compliance with these restrictions.

> The girls that jumped me live a couple of stops [away] in Brownsville and I live in Flatbush. I could run into them at any time. And I got rearrested last August because they said—It was 14 against one and I was by myself. I was at a party, and they came to the party and said I threatened the girl that I stabbed in the eye. […] They said that I threatened her with a knife, that I waved a knife at her, which I didn't do. That's what I had to plead guilty to, waving the knife at her. So, um, yeah, um, so like now like I be aware. […] Now I don't go to parties. I don't need that. I just stay around home.

Malika, in this passage, uses physical and social isolation to avoid further altercations with this group of girls. Her fear around encountering them—"I could run into them at any time"—has spread to her experience of her neighborhood in its entirety.

It was an acknowledged fact that the spaces where people were "outside" were those spaces most likely to be filled with targeted and random violence. During our group session, I asked girls to explain what they thought were some of the things that were likely to take place in these communal spaces.

> Jessie: Get raped, get jumped, get caught in the crossfire of a gun.
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> Elise: Does that happen in your neighborhood?
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> Jessie: It was on our street, where this guy and a girl were having a fight, and the girl came running across the street to our building and the guy was chasing her with this big ass gun. Any one of them kids—any one of us—could have gotten caught in that crossfire. Just the fact that she ran meant that any one of us could have gotten hit.
>
> Elise: Ok. So. Get jumped, crossfire, what else?
>
> Cherry: Just the hours when the kids get out of school. Fights, crossfire—
>
> Maribel: —Fights. Getting jumped.
>
> Jessie: That's the most common—getting stabbed. I think getting jumped is the most.

Jessie's initial comment demonstrates the way girls' conceptions of their

neighborhoods range fluidly between the personal, the observed, and the general. Her

knowledge of her street as a physical space conflated with her experiences of social

violence to the degree that they were inseparable. It also illustrates the ways girls

internalize the responsibility for the gendered violence they face; here, Jessie assigns

blame for the community's endangerment to the girl, because she "ran," rather than

the man actually wielding "the big ass gun."

Even when girls did not identify sites of violence as affecting themselves or

their families specifically, they all were aware of spots in the neighborhoods where

violence had occurred. Sometimes this was in the form of spaces where other young

people had been shot and killed (e.g. Nicole with the Elk's Nightclub). In this

context, Natalia's photograph of the abandoned lot assumes greater significance.

Schein's observation that "cultural landscape, as discourse materialized, is

simultaneously disciplinary in its spatial and visual strategies" anticipates the way

that the discourses of independence, individualism and personal responsibility, and

potential victimhood all conjoin in the spaces of abandoned lots, public housing

courtyards, streetcorners, and other spaces to discipline girls. As Maribel explained

of her Bronx neighborhood:

> Maribel: My mom…lets my little sister go to school by herself. Keep in mind,
> you know that highway bridge? My little sister got to go through there every day.
> And that neighborhood, that's like four or five blocks, then cross the bridge.
>
> Natalia: I think I know where you're talking about. I'm scared to go over that
> bridge. It's all them steps, and then cross over that long-ass bridge.
>
> Maribel: Alright, and my little sister, she's a girl to top it off. Around there—
>
> Nicole: There's nasty people there.

Maribel: —anything could happen. She could be on the bridge and it falls and my mom ain't gonna find out.

Elise: When you say nasty people, what do you mean?

Maribel: Guys who just look at girls and think up stuff, rapists, you know. It's a lot of guys perverted.

This discussion illustrates the degree to which the discourses are common knowledge among girls and effectively discipline their behavior.

As they worked to "stay positive" and remove themselves from potential social and physical spaces that could lead to additional arrests, the STARS girls all described an act of social isolation in the geographic terms of staying "inside". In one group session Cherry explained that, as a result of her involvement in the court process, "I don't be outside like that no more." Expanding on her avoidance of "outside," Cherry explained that "the people that—before when I used to cut school, there was a group of us—and now when they ask me, they already know the answer. 'No. No. No.' Like they don't even bother asking no more. I go my own way. They go their own way." Other girls shared this strategy of isolation. "Yeah," Malika agreed. "I had to cut a lot of people off." Jessie, likewise, described her decision to cease contact with her previous peer group, which had been involved in prostitution and credit card fraud, among other illegal activities, as a distinct departure from her behavior prior to her current case.

> This is like just with me, all my friends, they call me, I'm with it. Before this, it was like, "Oh, what you doing? I'm coming. Come get me. I'm there." And it was like, "I'm with it. I'm down for whatever." And now every time the police pass I'm like [acts scared]—I mean *paranoid*. That's why I'm not goin' back. 'Cause scared money makes no money. Scared money you get caught. That's how I feel. And we all know that I'm not one to get caught. Sorry. Fuck y'all. This is how I feel.

The discourse—and practice—of fast money was so commonplace among Jessie's wider peer network, that she ultimately felt the need to isolate herself completely to avoid being drawn back in. "Now," she said, "it's just me and my daughter, or me and my boyfriend, not me and my friends. I keep to myself."

While the inside/outside dichotomy is essential to a girl-centered epistemology, girls' strategic isolation and interpretations of "being inside" as the best choice, even among the difficult options, is not as straightforward as it might seem. Many scholars have noted the importance of public spaces, particularly for immigrants and African-Americans, whose various and varied cultural legacies impart a high value on shared, communal spaces.[211] Girls' decisions to be "outside"—in all its valences—might be reframed as just this kind of counterhegemonic practice. Dominant discourses depict girls as "delinquents" and "gang girls," as "hyper-sexual" and "anti-social." Familial and intimate partner double-binds create a context in which being "inside" is in fact nearly, if not equally, as dangerous as being "outside." Girls assert their agency and their counter-epistemological commitments by actively removing themselves from their complicated home spaces and the discourses therein; they fight and carry weapons—assume aggressive postures—countering community-level discourses that cast them

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[211] See, for instance, Luis Aponte-Pares, "Appropriating Place in Puero-Rican Barrios: Preserving Contemporary Urban Landscapes," in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, ed. Arnold Alanen and Robert Melnick (2000).; Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big City* (New York: Verso, 2000). Susana Torre, "Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo," in *Gender, Space, Architecture*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, and Iain Bordon (London: Routledge, 2000).; and Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992).

as victims; they seek out situations where they have more control over sexualizing and gendered violence from strangers when they engage in non-pimp controlled street-based prostitution.[212]

Conclusion

Girls understanding of their communities was tethered neither solely to their social communities—friends and neighbors—nor to their spatial communities—their neighborhoods. Rather, each was indelibly linked to, and intimately involved in, the production of the other. Central to girls' representations of their communities, visually and verbally, was a logic of violence. Girls described violence as regular, almost omnipresent, and also unpredictable. It might come in the form of sexual assaults or harassment, of physical assaults with or without a weapon, of random attacks by strangers, of being "in the wrong place at the wrong time" and getting caught up in other peoples' "drama." In short, simply being outside physically meant contending with the discourse of "outside."

This discourse of "outside" held numerous values, which often conflicted with one another: luxury material possessions, fast money, entrepreneurialism, neighborhood unity, fearlessness, independence, power, and loyalty. It put girls in a number of double-binds. Neighborhood unity simultaneously indicated safety *and* the potential for betrayal. Girls were targeted both for possessing material goods *and*

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[212] In my experience, both with these research participants and others, there is a wide range of voluntarism among individuals engaged in prostitution, from those who see themselves as sex workers to those who have severely traumatized by their time in "the life." My analysis here is specifically drawn from and limited to the experiences imparted by study participants who were involved in a more laterally-controlled form of street and internet prostitution, and not under the control of pimps.

for not possessing them.   Once girl was targeted, they would often continue to be attacked both for losing *or* for winning. If girls sought to avoid this violence by finding safety in numbers through gang involvement, they were exposed to violence both to get in the gang *and* to get out of the gangs. The gang might also abandon a girl in the midst of a fight, thereby failing to do that for which it was intended in the first place. If girls used weapons to protect themselves, they might be punished by the state or by others who would seek retaliation or desired to prove themselves.

Girls' responses to these double-binds were various, at times resisting neoliberal discourses and others recapitulating them. Girls' bedrooms, for instance, resisted their objectification by family and romantic partners, articulating their identities in relation (that is, their belonging) to families and friends. Often, girls used the geographic isolation of their neighborhoods strategically to create more control over their social relationships. They selected friends who both were of and were not of their neighborhoods; they elected to stay "inside," where they were afforded some degree of protection from the double-binds they confronted "outside."

The neoliberalization of New York City provided—and continues to provide—the "vibration" that set all this into motion. As the city redefines itself as clean, safe, and luxurious, the realities of life for those who are literally displaced in this quest are made increasingly invisible. Meanwhile neoliberal values—consumption and acquisition, independence, capital, "service" professions—have taken root in girls' social worlds. In this way, the precise mechanisms that make New York appear so successful to the city's business elite and the managerial class—

including policy-makers and criminal justice system professionals—are the very same

ones that perpetuate the inequality and violence girls face.

Chapter Five
Confronting Institutions

One time I was trying to go to court, and truancy came and got me. I was tight, son. I was having a fit. I'm like, "Yo, I'm gonna get locked up." I'm trying to tell them, "I gotta go to court, miss." She's like, "Where's your paper?" "Miss, I don't have it right now." She's like, "Oh, you gotta come with me." So you mean to tell me I'm about to get a warrant for you? All 'cause of this? Why you couldn't just let me go?
-Nicole, 17

On no subject were the STARS girls more clear than that of structural failure.

Discourses abounded in their communities, families, and peer networks about the

failure of government institutions to respect and protect the needs of the city's Black

and Latino residents. Moreover, as urban, low-income girls of color, the STARS girls

were involved with significantly more systems and institutions than their counterparts

whose class, racial, and geographic social locations differed. As Anaya said,

> I got left back like three times. The reason I got left back the last time was because I was in a group home shit. I was locked up. Niggas played me. I went to school there, and they passed me, and then I went to school—real school—and they said, "No, you gotta do it over."

Here Anaya refers to the time she spent in a group home, where she was placed

through Family Court. This passage reveals an insurgent knowledge girls possess:

that, far from being distinct from one another, girls' experiences of institutions are co-

constituted, deeply and intimately connected. In the passage above this manifests as

the combination of a number of different institutions within the rhetorical space of

179

prison (what Anaya calls "locked up"): the law, the courts, the group home, the

"fake" school, and the "real" school. Moreover, Anaya's use of the term "niggas,"

collapses the cohort of "the street" and the administrators of the institutions, gesturing

toward her recognition that she is getting "played" simultaneously by all, and that

these multiple institutions and the street are collectively part of the same system.

The nature of these institutions has changed dramatically in the last 40 years, as

New York City steadily shifted its governing ideology from "people welfare" to

"corporate welfare," to return to David Harvey's terminology.   These shifts include

the privatization of social services, which occurred in tandem with substantial welfare

reforms; the increasing militarization of schools; a growing reliance on "stop-and-

frisk" and "quality-of-life" policing strategies in girls' schools and communities; and,

up until recently, largely unregulated juvenile residential facilities. These institutions

extend, recapitulate, and even promote the violence and vulnerability girls experience

at home and in their communities. The very systems putatively established to serve

and protect girls instead expose them to additional abuses. Girls are *pushed out* of

their schools for being overage, under-credited, and court-involved, and the

mainstream economy for being under-qualified and under-educated. As schools

become increasingly militarized and overtly hostile to their Black and Latino

students, these young people are referred to the juvenile and criminal justice system

for matters formerly handled by school officials.[213] Via the law-and-order initiatives

proliferating in their communities (without, as we have seen, yielding either law or

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[213] See Udi Ofer, "Criminalizing the Classroom: The Rise of Aggressive Policing and Zero Tolerance Discipline in New York City Public School," *New York Law School Law Review* 56(2011/2012).

order), they are simultaneously *pulled into* the juvenile and criminal justice systems at staggering rates.[214] Under continued surveillance, girls' lives are pathologized in each of these institutional settings.

As Nicole and Anaya's observations illustrate, girls have to navigate various institutions with competing mandates and expectations; when girls work to fulfill one set of obligations, they are often in violation of another set, through no fault of their own. The ways these competing demands find articulation in girls' lived experiences illustrates the true complexity and nature of structural-level double-binds girls face. One order of operations out, the essential problem distills itself: neoliberalism's discourses of individualism and personal responsibility construct girls as individual, entrepreneurial agents, responsible for their own success or failure, while simultaneously cutting off their access to the very means by which they might legitimately actualize this promised success. The inherent tension between these neoliberal ideological commitments—particularly when they directly inform the policies and procedures of the institutions in girls' lives—and girls' lived experiences in fact *produces* the criminal behavior it putatively works to eradicate. For instance, court officials routinely instruct girls to stay crime-free, abide by guardians' curfews, follow guardians' rules, and attend school or hold steady jobs. The ideological

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[214] While this chapter focuses on the ways the public education system, unemployment, and policing funnel young people into the criminal justice system, another obvious and well-established route in is the child welfare system. None of the STARS participants identified this system as essential to their own experiences— though certainly many had been through it—so it is not a focus of this chapter. For more on this, see Lewis, "Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls."; M. L. Armstrong, "Adolescent Pathways: Exploring the Intersections Between Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice, PINS, and Mental Health," (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 1998).; and Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare*.

assumptions animating these stipulations are that home exists, and is safe; that guardians (including the courts themselves) are loving and tender nurturers with clear expectations who respond to misbehavior with logical consequences; that school is a place where girls are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed; that girls choose not to be employed; and that they are arrested in direct proportion to their criminal behavior. But the city neoliberalism is building hardly resembles its ideological image. As the previous chapters demonstrated, for most of the STARS girls home was not a safe place to be; parents and guardians were often unpredictable, unreliable, and vacillated between acting like friends, rejecting girls, and punishing girls; and girls' violent behavior was often deployed in an effort to protect themselves or their families. As this chapter will explore, for the STARS girls school was at best chaotic and at worst dangerous and frightening; jobs were scarce and girls under-qualified or excluded from consideration for most positions because of their criminal histories; and arrests were largely unmoored from girls' criminal behavior and certainly disconnected from their social realities. As a result, girls are exposed to a great deal of violence at the hands of institutions and systems at the same time that their experiences are being framed to them as individual rather than collective, as their own fault rather than as logical responses to a profoundly flawed set of policies, discourses, and practices.

The Dismantling of the Welfare State and the Discourse of Independence

At the heart of neoliberal ideology lies a definition of the "free market" as the sphere where individual enterprise and personal responsibility generate not only wealth but

social wellbeing. Following the fiscal crisis of 1975 and the reordering of governance

along conservative lines that occurred during the 1980s under Wall Street's

orchestrations locally, and Reaganism nationally, the 1990s saw the emergence of the

so-called "third-way" politicians, epitomized by Bill Clinton.[215] As I briefly explored

in this dissertation's introductory chapter, two primary concepts—privatization and

the concept of personal responsibility—capture neoliberalism's impact on *both*

governance and discourse, drawing out, as Lisa Duggan has put it, "the central

intersections between the *culture* of neoliberalism and its economic vision." [216]

Despite most "third-way" politicians' claims to the contrary, the discourse of personal

responsibility has been profoundly racialized and gendered. "*Welfare mothers,*

criminals, and the *underclass* are the most recent code words for black people,"

writes Robin D.G. Kelley. "Each of these terms reflects a growing 'common sense'

that black behavior—whether we call it nihilism, a culture of poverty, or plain

irresponsibility—is the source of urban poverty and violence and a drain on our

national resources."[217]   This is a discourse that gets re-energized with each

presidential election cycle. We can hear it just beneath the surface of Republican

Vice-Presidential nominee Paul Ryan's call for even greater cuts to the welfare state

in the 2012 elections. In a speech at the Republican National Convention, Ryan

suggested that:

> A dull, adventureless journey from one entitlement to the next, a government-
> planned life, a country where everything is free but us. Listen to the way we're
> spoken to already, as if everyone is stuck in some class or station in life, victims

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[215] Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy.*
[216] Ibid. 12.
[217] Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting Culture Wars in Urban America.* 91.

of circumstances beyond our control, with government there to help us cope with our fate. … When I was waiting tables, washing dishes, or mowing lawns for money, I never thought of myself as stuck in some station in life. I was on my own path, my own journey, an American journey where I could think for myself, decide for myself, define happiness for myself. That's what we do in this country. That's the American Dream. That's freedom, and I'll take it any day over the supervision and sanctimony of the central planners.[218]

The implication is that those who are stuck and victimized fail to "think….decide… define," and that government should get out of the way. But in fact, the "central planners" who shape the lives of court-involved girls are operating within, not outside, this set of assumptions; the result has been not a retreat of state power, but its powerful repurposing to push those without class power further to the margins.

Much of neoliberalism's perniciousness lies in the degree to which the racist and classist tenets cloaked in Ryan's speech have been justified and subtly reinforced via national discourses around welfare "reform" and "law and order." As the private prison industry, as well as "zero-tolerance" and "quality-of-life" initiatives, saw a dramatic expansion in the mid-1990s, welfare reforms saw dramatic cutbacks of state support for women and children in particular, under the guise of neoliberal virtues. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, through its name alone, announces the degree to which it seeks to mask its gender and racial agenda with seemingly neutral goals—"self-esteem" and "empowerment" through "work opportunity."[219]

The actual policy changes contained in the bill itself, as Anna Marie Smith has

[218] Paul Ryan, "Transcript: Rep. Paul Ryan's Convention Speech," National Public Radio, http://www.npr.org/2012/08/29/160282031/transcript-rep-paul-ryans-convention-speech.
[219] Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. 16. See also

traced them, include the limiting of state financial support to newborns, mandatory

child support even in cases of domestic violence, family planning and adoption

relinquishment incentives, and sexual abstinence education.[220] Dorothy Roberts

diagnoses the context for these reforms thusly: "when welfare reformers devise

remedies for maternal irresponsibility, they have Black single mothers in mind….

The image of the lazy Black welfare queen who breeds children to fatten her

allowance shapes public attitudes about welfare policy."[221] The reverse is also true.

As welfare policy is increasingly recast as a social ill that acts against the country's

economic well-being, those assumed to be the demographic most "dependent" on

welfare are further pathologized.[222] Moreover, the conflation of race, class, social

welfare, and criminality so evident in the 1965 Moynihan report on "The Negro

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[220] Qtd ibid. 16.

[221] Qtd. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting Culture Wars in Urban America*. 91-92. Though the idea of welfare fraud was circulating in the public discourse as early as the 1960s, the racialized and gendered vilification of the "welfare queen" is most often attributed to Ronald Reagan's 1976 presidential campaign, when he famously described a woman from Chicago's south side who was arrested for fraud. ""Welfare Queen" Becomes Issue in Reagan Campaign," *The New York Times*, February 14 1976. See also Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister-Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (2011); Ange-Marie Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen* (2004).

[222] See Alice O'Connor, "The Privatized City: The Manhattan Institute, the Urban Crisis, and the Conservative Counterrevolution in New York," *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 333-353 (2008); Lynne Haney, "Introduction: Gender, Welfare, and States of Punishment," *Social Poliitcs* 11, no. 3 (2004). And Jill McCorkel, "Criminally Dependant? Gender, Punishment, and the Rhetoric of Welfare Reform," *Social Poliitcs* 11, no. 3 (2004). In truth, in 2010 the percentages of white and Black families in the U.S. receiving "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families" (TANF) were nearly the same—31.8% and 31.9%, respectively; white Americans, then, in shear numbers account for the largest population receiving these benefits. Administration for Children & Families, "Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients," http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource/character/fy2010/fy2010-chap10-ys-final.

Family" gets repurposed to new ends; laissez-faire economics fuse with cultural

moralism, the underlying assumption of which is that—to quote Duggan—"the sexual

practices and household structures of poor women, especially black women, are the

central causes of poverty and of associated social disorder and criminality."[223] In the

sphere of culture, then, independence, personal responsibility, and privatization,

represent the major discursive tropes of neoliberal ideology, all with a value-neutral

overlay that disguises the essential class power consolidation its policies promote.

These tropes are, at the same time, rhetorically positioned as the solution to racialized

moral and social urban decay. In a single stroke, they marshal support for cuts to

public services and stigmatize the very people most damaged by these cuts. As

Lynne Haney writes:

> On the one hand, responsibility discourse is presented as a template for recipients
> to interpret their past experiences with public assistance. From its deployment by
> politicians to welfare workers, it is a way to get poor women to view their use of
> assistance as a personal failing. The notion of choice looms large in this discourse
> as recipients are portrayed as needing to own up to the bad decisions they made in
> their domestic and work lives.[224]

A recent campaign by the Human Resource Administration—which cost the city

$400,000—highlights this discourse in action. This campaign features an array of

distraught toddlers (almost exclusively Black and Latino) presenting "the facts" of

teen pregnancy to their mothers. But messages like "Honestly Mom…changes are he

won't stay with you" and "Are you ready to end up by yourself?" (Figure 19)

reinforce the heteronormativity and middle-class values girls encounter more broadly,

[223] Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. 16.
[224] Haney, "Introduction: Gender, Welfare, and States of Punishment."344

through reminders that "he" won't "marry" you. Recalling that three of the four

pregnant or parenting STARS girls identified as bisexual or lesbian, and that all had

Figure 21: New York City's Human Resource Administration Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign
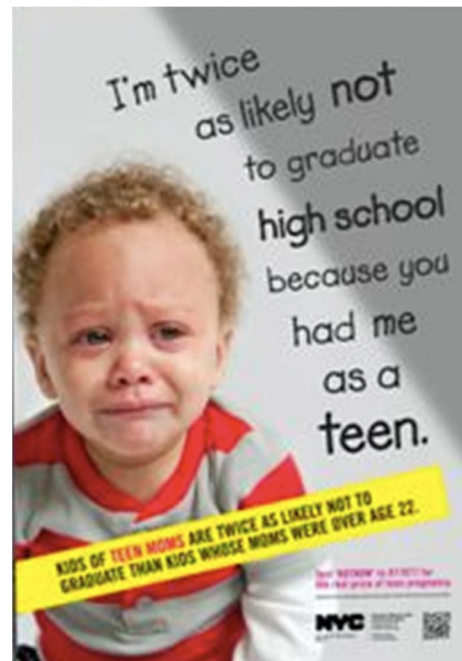
Figure 22: New York City's Human Resource Administration Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign

experienced emotional and physical violence at the hands of their babies' fathers

makes these messages appear starkly disconnected from reality. Further, they trade

on girls' feelings of shame and isolation; even the child here is patronizing her

mother, backed by institutional threats that, once again, this young mother will likely

end up "by [her]self." Ultimately, messages draw on narratives of the "Welfare

Queen" to inflect neoliberal individualism, reminding girls that their own "bad

choices" already are (the messages are, after all, in the present tense, in the voice of

the already-born child) the cause of their future poverty and their children's

suffering.[225]

Pushed Out: The School-to-Prison Pipeline

Among the cuts to public services, the reshaping of education along the lines of a

competitive marketplace brings the contradictions of neoliberalization to the fore.

Notwithstanding claims that educating children is necessary for the country's future

and for a "competitive" workforce, the education system sends STARS girls

numerous messages—some subtle, some not so subtle—that their education doesn't

matter. Rather than being blind to the ways their schools are given short shrift both

fiscally and educationally, girls are in fact highly attuned to the ways they are

devalued. "I think, it's like, the students *can't* value the learning environment,"

Stephanie explained. "They come in through the monitors, there's not enough

books.[226] It gives them the negative attitude, like 'Why should I want to come here?'

The teachers don't really have the opportunity to teach them, people are always

fighting or talking, and everybody is being disruptive. Kids feel like, 'I can't learn

here anyway, so why even try?'" The STARS girls' experiences at school gesture

toward a basic failure of the school system to educate, let alone protect, girls of color

from low-income communities.

Many schools, often those with the largest numbers of African-American and

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[225] New York City Human Resource Administration, "Think Being a Teen Parent Won't Cost You?," http://www.flickr.com/photos/nychra.

[226] By "monitors," Stephanie means the magnetometers that, as of 2006, students in 21% of the city's public middle schools and 86% of the city's public high schools must pass through every day. Girls also refer to these as "metal detectors." As I discuss later, girls repeatedly referenced the invasiveness of this experience, and the deterrence it posed to young people whose relationship to school was already precarious.

Latino students, have dispensed with suspensions entirely, favoring instead immediate involvement of law enforcement.[227] "In my school, if you fight you get locked up," explained Cherry. "Automatically. They don't ask questions and they don't do suspensions anymore." "Half the people in here are in here for fighting," added Jessie. Many of these fights occurred on or around school grounds. Rather than decreasing the amount of fighting they were confronted with—as bystanders and participants—girls instead experienced the presence of school safety agents and metal detectors as heightening their sense of vulnerability—to both physical and systemic violence—rather than increasing their feelings of safety. The bureaucracy of the school entrance process—from showing ID and signing in a log, to going through the metal detectors—did little to affect the likelihood of violence or to provide practical oversight of school grounds. Instead, girls described it as merely the performance of safety. Natalia described a school that her cousin went to that, despite all these precautions, was "so easy to get into. You're supposed to show ID, go through metal detectors." Knowing precisely the school of which Natalia spoke, Maribel agreed, "You could just open the side door, I heard." Continuing, Natalia explained, "I went through the metal detectors, shoot. In order to use the bathroom you have to sign your name. I made up a fake name, everything. People just be coming in and out. They don't know! People be having mad guns, knives, shit like that." Recalling that girls' carrying of weapons was a response to their perceptions of the omnipresent threat of rape or assault, it seems safe to infer that the young people carrying these

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[227] See Johanna Miller et al., "Education Interrupted: The Growing Use of Suspensions in New York City's Public Schools," (New York: New York Civil Liberties Union, 2011).

189

weapons into the school agree with Natalia about the relative danger of their educational environment, in spite of all its so-called safety precautions.

Scholars and activists who work with young people recognize the centrality of public education to youth involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. In the last decade scholars have begun referring to these interlocking institutions as the "school-to-prison pipeline."[228] There are two primary ways that the processes underlying the "school-to-prison pipeline" manifest in girls' experiences of school: increasingly harsh disciplinary practices and "discharge" policies. New York City youth face "zero-tolerance" disciplinary procedures in public schools as well on the street. These disciplinary procedures—which mandate suspension in response to the first instance of misbehavior—are inconsistent, and increasingly punitive and state-reliant; the number of "zero-tolerance" infractions listed in the Department of Education's (DOE) Discipline Code increased by 200% between 2001 and 2010.[229] "Discharge" policies, meanwhile, essentially "push" youth out of mainstream, traditional classes and into GED programs, alternative schools, or out of the education system entirely, into the waiting arms of "the street" or the justice system (which, as we have seen, form a continuity).

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[228] Recent years have seen this term stretched to include the years leading up to school, as in the Children Defense Fund's "cradle to prison" campaign, launched with their report in 2007. This formulation looks beyond the failures of public schools to adequately educate young people of color and their increasing militarization to include the impact of pervasive poverty, lack of access to health care and insurance, gaps in early childhood development, abuse and neglect, unmet mental health needs, and the criminalization of substance use. For more, see The Children's Defense Fund, "America's Cradle to Prison Pipeline," (New York: The Children's Defense Fund, 2007).
[229] Miller et al., "Education Interrupted: The Growing Use of Suspensions in New York City's Public Schools." 3.

Over the last decade, the Bloomberg administration introduced two new school-safety initiatives, both of which have dramatically altered school communities: first, the "Impact Schools" Program introduced in 2004 and, second, a program of "roving" metal detectors deployed by the NYPD to up to 10 different schools a day.[230] There are approximately 5,200 safety officers in city schools, all trained and supervised by the New York Police Department, who have the authority to arrest students.[231] Most high schools have 10-20 safety agents and one to three police officers on premises (the latter carrying weapons).[232] Under the "Impact Schools" program, those schools deemed most dangerous (most of which are over-enrolled by 115-180% and almost entirely non-white), are flooded with additional security personnel and allowed heavier penalties for minor offenses. In a program with particularly Foucauldian valences, students can be designated "Spotlight Students," which subjects them to removal to offsite detention centers or alternative schools without following established procedures.[233] In its first year, the average number of

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[230] Elora Mukherjee, "Criminalizing the Classroom: The Over-Policing of New York City Schools," (New York: New York Civil Liberties Union, 2007). 9.
[231] Miller et al., "Education Interrupted: The Growing Use of Suspensions in New York City's Public Schools." 13.
[232] Elizabeth Sullivan, "Deprived of Dignity: Degrading Treatment and Abusive Treatment in New York City and Los Angeles Public Schools," (New York: National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, 2007). 35.
[233] I refer here to Michel Foucault's riff on Jeremy Bentham's concept of the Panopticon, a central tower surrounded by a circular building, the interior walls of which were cells, or stations, where subjects could be observed by unseeable authority figures in the tower. Foucault adopts Bentham's Panopticon as a metaphor for new technologies deployed by the carceral archipelago, specifically the proliferation of the inspecting gaze. If Bentham's plan ensured a sense of constant surveillance, Foucault argues that within the carceral archipelago—regardless of whether the physical structure of the Panopticon is present—its basic technique of control through surveillance remains. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth*

suspensions at Impact Schools increased by almost 25%, while attendance rates dropped more precipitously than in regular schools.[234] Neither the DOE nor the NYPD keep statistics on the number of in-school arrests. However, as juvenile arrests for youth-on-youth assaults rose almost 40% during this period, it seems reasonable to suggest a correlation between the increased presence and power of police in the schools and the increased reliance on the criminal justice system to maintain control. The existence of the roving security system allows not only for increased surveillance of the student population, but also means that on a given day, students stand outside school buildings regardless of inclement weather for up to three hours waiting to pass through screening, are potentially subjected to police frisking, and miss classes, the work for which they are often not allowed to make up. And yet one report suggests that only .7% of the total amount of items confiscated through these roving security operations are classified as weapons—a category that includes box cutters and guns—despite the presence of up to 60 additional school safety agents and NYPD officers and dozens of additional police vehicles; 70% of items confiscated are cell phones, and 29% are iPods and other kinds of consumer electronics.[235]

Girls' descriptions of school reveal this dynamic, essentially writ large. Their primary experiences of school were of being simultaneously invisible as a victim and visible as a perpetrator. Describing a large high school in the Bronx, Maribel

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of the Prison; Jeremy Bentham, "The Panopticon and Other Prison Writings," http://cartome.org/panopticon2.htm#1.

[234] Sullivan, "Deprived of Dignity: Degrading Treatment and Abusive Treatment in New York City and Los Angeles Public Schools." 20.

[235] Mukherjee, "Criminalizing the Classroom: The Over-Policing of New York City Schools." 9; 19.

explained that "there I was involved in gangs, involved in drugs. I used to walk in and stay like an hour, from 9-10, and just leave. And the security guard wouldn't even do nothing. Like, that school didn't really care about the students." School safety agents were depicted by the young women in this study as exerting their power in unpredictable and seemingly arbitrary ways at other times. "They be wilding in my school," said Maribel. "It could be like first period and you just walk in school, and you got to eat your breakfast. One of the school safety—I'm eating, I'm starving—and he dead-ass took my breakfast and threw it in the garbage. I was tight." Nicole explained that, at her school, agents would verbally accost students from the moment they walked through the front door, saying things like, "'Pull up your pants!' You know? And I'm telling them, 'Leave me alone, 'cause I'm not in the mood.' They just yell back, 'Shut up.'"

By contrast, girls felt that school staff or school safety agents sometimes overlooked or even condoned the kind of behavior that made them feel threatened— which actively contributed to their sense of vulnerability at school. "When I used to go to Monroe," Jessie explained, "the security guard would let us fight." Many girls described specific locations within their school buildings that were designated "fighting spots." Said Maribel: "our fighting spot was the fourth floor, near the main entrance. Everybody knew. I would fight and after I would go to class with scratches. And nobody would ask nothing. At all." The result was the confusing contradiction of schools' regulation of innocuous behaviors involving dressing and eating and the deregulation of more dangerous behaviors like fighting—until, randomly, the police involved themselves, at which point girls were thrown into more

violent environments.

Not only did girls feel vulnerable to potential violence from other students; they also felt that their relationship with staff was, more often than not, adversarial. Many had stories of faculty or staff grabbing them, pushing them, or other physical altercations. When she was in middle school (which she did not complete), Jessie explained that one of her teachers "grabbed my wrist, and I pushed it, like, 'Don't touch me. You're not supposed to touch me.'" When I inquired about what had prompted this behavior, she explained that at the time, she simply, "didn't want to go somewhere. He was like, 'Come on.' And grabbed me. But he got attacked. It's like, 'Get away from me.' Like, I pushed him. And he's like, 'Oh, you're not supposed to hit.' I'm like, 'I don't care. You're not supposed to put your hands on me.' And then I got in trouble." As I argued in Chapter Two, girls' experiences of abuse prime them for violent reactions in situations just such as this—where the stakes are increasingly high. Young people have been arrested, even charged with felonies, for less.[236] Jessie's use of the passive voice—"he got attacked"—parallels law enforcement's posture of objectivity, which it then violates, in Jessie's view, with sudden personal invasions. Her mirroring of the teacher's phase, "You're not supposed to hit," with her own, "You're not supposed to put your hands on me," clearly demonstrates her comprehension of institutional justice's messages and their inherent contradictions. Nicole, similarly, found herself in an altercation with a

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[236] Examples often sited by critics of zero-telerance policies include a twelve-year-old girl being arrested for writing on her desk, a four-year-old boy handcuffed for not taking a nap, and a six-year-old handcuffed for having a temper tantrum. See Ofer, "Criminalizing the Classroom: The Rise of Aggressive Policing and Zero Tolerance Discipline in New York City Public School." 1377.

school official who used physical force to try to enforce school rules. "I walked into some class to say something to my son," she said. "The teacher was like, 'Get out of the class. Get out of the class. Get out of the class.' And he grabbed me! And I just started wilding on him, like, 'Do not grab me. Do not grab me. Do not touch me. Do not touch me.'" Girls' experiences of physical contact were not limited to this kind of grabbing, however. Maribel explained that one the deans at her school "be harassing the girls and looking at girls and fondling them. And he touched one of the girls in a place that he wasn't supposed to…. That school is going to get closed down. And there's already been five fights already in one week. Two per day. That school is bad."[237]

Despite many middle and high schools' prison-like atmospheres, girls still made attempts to "get [their] education." This became particularly important as girls found themselves court-involved. In a naked articulation of neoliberal ideology, judges almost always monitor school attendance, with the stated assumption, of course, that a good education means that girls would be in a position to attend college and "make something of themselves"; judges required reporting for all STARS participants who were of compulsory school age. Beyond this, the Department of Probation has access to the Department of Education's attendance records, and thus is able to pull school records for any young person it sees fit. These records are introduced to court proceedings without the permission of young people's parents or

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[237] In recent years there have been a number of reports of sexual abuse by teachers, with the low point coming in 2012, with 12 allegations. Vivian Lee, "Schools Chancellor Addresses Latest DOE Sexual Abuse Arrest," NY1, http://www.ny1.com/content/top_stories/163149/schools-chancellor-addresses-latest-doe-sexual-abuse-arrest.

guardians. Young people are told they must attend school *and* class daily. In the

experience of nearly every STARS participant, however, this proved exceedingly

frustrating. In many of the schools the STARS participants attended teachers had

such difficulty controlling the behavior of the student body that most girls—acting

like the rational consumers the court encourages them to be—saw little benefit to

remaining in the classroom. As Nicole explained:

> Well, sometimes at some points I be wanting to work and niggas be OD'ing.
> Want to be throwing papers at the teachers, want to be mad loud, want to come
> talk to me when I'm trying to do my work.   Like, "Shut up." I don't want to hear
> that shit! And when they're throwing paper at the teachers, the teacher can't
> teach because they gotta say, "Stop throwing paper, guys." And they keep doing
> it. Then the teacher got to call the dean. Then the dean tell them to stop throwing
> paper, and they don't listen. So it's just back and forth, the teacher got to say
> something and stop teaching, or go get the dean. I be tight and it causes me to
> walk out of the classroom. It's too much and I can't learn, so I be like, "Yo, fuck
> this class. They won't listen, so I'm out." And then, I just go out into the
> hallway.

Nicole here articulates a *systemic* failure of New York City's public schools. Rather

than the failure of one teacher, independently incapable of performing his or her job,

by the time students are in high school the entire school culture runs this way.

Despite the fact that she was behaving logically in the context of that environment, by

walking out of a class in chaos where no productive learning was happening anyway,

Nicole put herself at risk of being marked absent for that class. This designation, in

turn, could have had ramifications for her participation in the STARS program, and,

at the discretion of her judge, even potentially have led to her incarceration. In this

double-bind, girls receive messages that they must attend classes to become

"successful," while the context—chaotic classes and militarized schools—make

attendance frustrating and expose girls to increased contact with law enforcement.

Another significant problem STARS participants—and New York City youth generally—faced was the reluctance of the Department of Education to accept credits youth accumulated while in detention or placement (for those in the juvenile justice system) or in jail or incarceration (for those in the criminal justice system). When in detention or jail, girls were removed from the rosters at their home schools and moved to the rosters of Passages Academy, the name of the network of DOE schools in detention facilities in the city. More often than not there was a lag time between girls' movements from one school to another and when their names appeared on rosters. This made tracking attendance very difficult. Sometimes, depending on the length of their detention or incarceration, they would have to go to their schools to reenroll, which in turn required paperwork and a (willing and ambulatory) guardian for girls 18 and under, something many girls did not have. This series of hurdles positioned girls to drop out. Or, as was the case with Anaya, they might find themselves able to reenroll but without the ability of transferring credits they believed they were earning while in facilities. In New York City, students are required to earn 42 credits to graduate. Sometimes schools simply refused to accept those credits earned at a facility.[238] This was the problem Anaya faced when she came out of her

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[238] Another common problem young people encountered was transferring school credits earned while placed or incarcerated at upstate facilities, which were all using New York State credit schemas rather than New York City's. Upon return home, students were responsible for bringing copies of their school records to their home schools. However, like most teenagers—even those with less transient lives—these young people often had difficulty keeping track of the appropriate documents. (Maribel's folder of documents, discussed in the introduction to Chapter Three, stood out to me even at the time as unusual for a teenager. As I learned more about all the institution pressures acting on these young women, however, I saw how much of a necessity it was.) Practically speaking, placing the onus for credit transfer on the young people themselves meant that most youth were not awarded those credits they

group home. After being told she would not be given credit for work during her stay

at the group home, Anaya explained:

> I was like, "What? You got to be kidding me! I don't want to go back to school!"
> … I passed and everything, but they were like, "Oh, we don't see that." You got
> to be kidding me. I was tight. I was the oldest one up in there. Like, 17 in the
> 8th grade? That's just mad embarrassing.

As with HRA's teen pregnancy prevention campaign, Anaya's insurgent knowledge

reveals shame as a state disciplinary tactic with young women in school, as well.

This frustration led to Anaya's eventual dropping out later that year. This is all too

typical for court-involved youth, and indeed a common path by which a young person

might then be "pushed out"—told they were either too old to attend a middle school

or "counseled" into a GED program.

The increasing militarized nature of New York City's schools, and students'

intense sense of alienation from them, is reflected in dismal city-wide graduation

rates and enrollment practices. Nearly half of the teenagers who enter city schools as

first-time 9th graders become "overage and under-credited" within four years, and

therefore the primary targets of discharge policies.[239] Students who leave New York

City public schools without graduating are assigned one of 23 "discharge" codes, for

reasons such as:

> transferring to another New York City Department of Education school (including
> fulltime alternative programs, home schooling, home instruction, or a District 75

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had earned. A third problem was that fewer credits were required for graduation at
NYS schools (22) than at NYC schools (44), so that for a year-long class students
might earn one credit rather than three despite having done an equivalent amount of
work. Rather than do a simple equation to arrive at the correct number of credits,
however, most schools would simply apply the number on the transcript (in those
instances that they elected to award credit at all). This is another example of
irrational rationalism.

[239] Catherine Gewertz, "Pathways to a Diploma," *Education Weekly* (2007).

school), transferring to a part-time or full time Department of Education-run GED or YABC program, transferring to an educational setting outside of the city's public schools (including parochial/private schools, institutions, or public schools elsewhere), obtaining a full-time employment certificate, enrolling in a full-time GED program outside of the New York City public school system, voluntary withdrawal or discharge after 20 consecutive days of non-attendance, ageing out of the system (turning 21), voluntary withdrawal due to pregnancy, and expulsion.[240]

"Discharged" students are removed from the city's enrollment rolls entirely, neither counted as drop-outs nor factored into the denominator when graduation rates are calculated.[241] Between 1997 and 2001, more than 160,000 students were discharged from public high schools.[242] Between 2001 and 2007, 142, 262 students were discharged. During 2007, 23% of "Hispanic" general education students, and 21% of Black students were discharged (as compared to 19% of white students and 16% of Asian students). Youth caught up in the juvenile justice system, however, are particularly vulnerable to being discharged or "pushed out," as advocates have termed it, since many schools report that they do not accept enrollment for students with less than 15 credits or who are over a certain age (a patently illegal practice, according to former city public advocate Betsy Gutbaum).[243] Many of these pushed-out students are directed toward GED programs, which between 1996 and 2002 reported 30-40% increases in enrollments in 16 and 17 year-olds.[244] Twenty percent of New York City young people between the ages of 17 and 24—an estimated 173,000 young people—

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[240] Jennifer L. Jennings and Leonie Haimson, "High School Discharges Revisited: Trends in New York City's Discharge Rates, 2000-2007," (New York: Class Size Matters, 2009). 7.
[241] Ibid. 2.
[242] Betsy Gutbaum, "Pushing Out At-Risk Students: An Analysis of High School Discharge Figures," (New York: Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 2002). 1.
[243] Ibid. 30.
[244] Ibid. 2.

is, however, neither in school nor employed. One-third of New York City's

disconnected youth lack a high school diploma; African American and Latino youth

comprise almost 70% of this population.[245] Young women of color are 44% of the

total disconnected youth.[246] The consequences of this disconnection are evident in

future earnings: people with no high school diploma or GED are expected to bring in

an estimated $24,000 annually; those with high school diplomas or GEDs, $32,600;

and those with bachelor's degrees $56,700.[247] Over a lifetime, the difference is

hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Pushed Out: Urban Girls and Employment

As the previous chapter illustrated, STARS girls felt profoundly excluded from the

labor market, despite very middle-class aspirations to get a well-paying job and raise

a family. Girls were constantly looking for employment—a job or engagement in

education being one of the program's primary requirements for successful

completion—but were frustrated by the lack of positions. Consequently, many took

jobs they did not enjoy, with limited hours and no benefits, at fast food restaurants

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[245] Lazar Treschan, Brooke Richie-Babbage, and Santa Soriano-Vasquez, "Missed Opportunity: How New York City Can Do a Better Job of Reconnecting Youth on Public Assistance to Education and Jobs," (New York City: The Community Service Society and The Resilience Advocacy Project, 2011). 1.

[246] Marc Levitan, "Out of School, Out of Work,...Out of Luck?: New York City's Disconnected Youth," (New York: Community Service Society of New York, 2006). 4.

[247] Anthony P. Carnevale, Stephen J. Rose, and Ban Cheah, "The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings," (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2011). 3-4. See also Pathways to Prosperity Project, "Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenges of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century," (Boston: Harvard University School of Education, 2011).

and retail stores. "Oh my god. There's no jobs out here," Maribel told me in one group interview session. "I been looking and there's no jobs out here." Anaya agreed. "I'm stuck with a Saturday job [at McDonald's]. I'm trying to get days. I'm gonna see if my boss could give me days. There's mad people applying for these jobs."

Anaya's perception that there were "mad people" applying for similar low level positions is accurate. In early 2007, only five percent of those seeking employment were unemployed. Following the market collapse in the fall of that year and the subsequent recession, New York City lost 114,000 payroll jobs and tens of thousands of workers saw their work hours curtailed. Unemployment more than doubled, reaching 10.3% by September of 2009, where it has more or less remained ever since. As of 2009, there were over 400,000 unemployed persons in New York City—the highest number on record.[248] Those who have jobs, like Anaya and Malika, still find it difficult to make ends meet, which is not surprising given the fact that New York City workers have not experienced wage gains during the last two expansions. In fact, the rapid expansion of available credit that filled the gap between stagnant wages and rising prices was the proximate cause of the financial crisis of 2008. Since 1990, the real median hourly wage has dropped by 11.4%.[249] Such are the fruits of the neoliberal reorganization of the city's governance and working class in the late 1970s.

Within these larger figures lurk stark racial and gender differences. Wages for most gender/race-ethnic groups declined by two to three percent from 2002 to 2008.

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[248] Fiscal Policy Institute, "New York City: A Tale of Two Recoveries." ii.
[249] Ibid.7.

Black women saw the steepest decline (6.1%) in real median hourly wages, while white women saw their median wage increase by 1.6%.[250] Latinas were unemployed at 11.7% and Black females at 12%, while the unemployment rate for white females was 7.1%.[251] Nearly a third (31%) of New York's unemployed are young people 16-24, precisely the age range of the STARS participants during the period I conducted my research. Their unemployment rates were between two and six times higher than those in other age brackets: 40.7% for teenagers; 24.9% for those in their early twenties. For those in the prime working age bracket of 25 to 54, the unemployment rate at the end of 2009 was 8.6%. For those 55 and older, unemployment was 5.2%.[252]

As with most inequality ratios, the further away from Manhattan's financial center, the greater the disparity. At the end of 2009, unemployment was 13.3% in the Bronx and 11% in Brooklyn.[253] Within boroughs, the differences are even greater. Estimates suggest that unemployment was 5.1% on Manhattan's Upper East and West Sides in the third quarter of 2009, compared to 15.7% in the South and Central Bronx and 19.2% in Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood. In three of the five boroughs—the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan—unemployment among African Americans exceeded 1%, and unemployment among Latinos was 15% or higher in five neighborhoods.[254] Notably, the majority of the STARS participants lived in the neighborhoods with the highest unemployment rates and the highest incarceration

[250] Ibid.7.
[251] Ibid. 24.
[252] Ibid. 26.
[253] Ibid. 25.
[254] Patrick McGeehan, "A Localized Breakdown of Joblessness in New York," New York Times, http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/12/29/a-localized-breakdown-of-joblessness-in-new-york/.

rates.

As discussed in the previous chapter, girls who could not find work find alternative ways to make money, usually, as they put it, by being "on my hustle." Whether drug dealing (as Anaya, Nicole, and Natalia had done), participating in an ENT (as Maribel, Malika, and Natalia had done), or engaging in prostitution (as Jessie had done), girls eventually look elsewhere when their attempts at finding "on the books" work stall out. Most girls rely on Craigslist or head-hunting agencies to find openings. Said Anaya: "You could find some stuff on Craigslist. There's where I found a receptionist job." Despite the fact that she applied to that and many other positions, she was unable to leave her limited-hour McDonald's job because, as she told me, no one had as yet "gotten back to [her]." Craigslist was, in fact, the avenue by which Jessie entered "the life" of prostitution. "It's hard to explain it," she confided, "but we were on Craigslist, looking for jobs. Basically you post it, you post yourself."

In addition to being structurally shut out of the mainstream economy and shuttled into often-illegal alternative entrepreneurial endeavors, girls' difficulty in finding this "on the book" work makes them increasingly vulnerable with respect to their court cases. Judges expect girls who are out of school to be gainfully employed (that is, "productive citizens"). Those who are not risk running afoul of court obligations. Jessie explained:

> And my judge told my court rep, 'Y'all don't have any mandatory job searches and stuff like that?' He was like, 'No, just voluntary.' … [M]y judge was actually frustrated because they didn't like have a place where we have to go to look for jobs, or have a person or anybody to be like, 'You've got to do this,' or we've got to do this job search.

The requirement that all girls find and maintain employment was, even for the

STARS program, impractical. This was due to numerous causes, including the

structural disparities in hiring and employment practices, girls' criminal records, and

young people's presumed employability. Jessie felt that girls—herself included—

were repeatedly denied employment because of their records. "It's illegal for them

not to hire you because of your criminal record," Jessie informed me. "So they just

tell you you're overqualified. Overqualified. Have you ever heard that?" When I

told her that I had, in fact, never been told I was overqualified for a position, she

sighed in frustration. "I have. So many times. Overqualified." This criminal record

becomes conflated with race, gender, class and culture, such that STARS girls felt

targeted for exclusion. Maribel told me:

> [A]t the end of the day these kids don't have the criteria to go to work. They got
> tattoos all over their hands, on their neck, and they're going there, and they look a
> hot mess. Like I'm—I filled out an application the other day, and it was like—
> and when you lie, they do a background search anyway. They're not gonna tell
> you they do a background search. They do a background search anyway—I put it
> on there. They email me back, "Oh, you're a special candidate. We're gonna call
> you." They had my email and my number and everything. So, it's like if it is—if
> they do reject you on your criminal record, why do they email me back? They
> did—they saw the whole application. And everybody asks that question. So
> come on.

Pulled In: Policing and Law and Order Practices

Even as girls are pushed out of school for being overage and under-credited—often

less through fault of their own than through consistent and pervasive institutional

failure—and out of the job market for being under-qualified and unemployable, they

are pulled into the criminal justice system at increasing rates. This process of being

pulled in is heavily inflected by race, class, gender, and sexuality. In the past year, a

series of stories in the *New York Times* and on New York City's National Public Radio station, WNYC, have brought to light what grassroots activists and young people have articulated for years: that young people of color have increasingly become targets of the Bloomberg administration's racialized policing approach, which relies in large part on "stop-and-frisk" tactics to "keep crime down." These stories tend to focus on young men, who are stopped considerably more often than young women. The STARS girls' experiences, however, suggest that girls are also victims of this approach, which makes them vulnerable to a wide variety of subsequent and extensive punishment by the state.

A clear demonstration of the "school-to-prison pipeline" emerges around girls' interactions with truancy officers. Like school safety agents, these officers sit at the nexus of education and law enforcement. As an arm of the New York City Police Department, truancy officers are authorized to decide whether to return a truant young person to school or to the local police precinct. They are understood to target, disproportionately, young people of color. Jessie, for instance, was home-schooled. At the age of 19, however, she was also far beyond compulsory school age. Nonetheless, she consistently found herself explaining to truancy officers why she was not in school. "When I drop my daughter off at school, they approach me with, 'Shouldn't you be going to school?'" she explained. "'Huh? What? You talking to me?' I have to show them my ID and I have to do a whole bunch of bullshit, show them my homeschool ID, so it's like 'Leave me alone! I'm nowhere around a school zone, yet you're going to harass me and tell me I should be at school.'" Luckily, Jessie and her mother have the requisite knowledge to ensure she *possessed* a

homeschool ID and made sure she carried it on her. Were Jessie to have been caught

without the ID, she would have found herself at even higher risk for arrest. Nicole

was younger and more reactive; she regularly had encounters with "truancy" that

resulted in her being arrested.   Take, for example, her description of a time when she

was picked up with a group of kids.

> There was some girl, she was joking on them. She was cutting ass on them. I
> was dying. Son, I didn't even do nothing and the officer, some lady officer, told
> the cops to lock me up. So that meant that they was taking me to the precinct,
> they wasn't taking me to school. Because everybody that was going to school
> was on this side, 'cause the precinct right in the train station, so she was pulling
> handcuffs. And nobody else is getting handcuffed that's going to school. So I'm
> like, "No! I didn't even do nothing. No." And then I hit her, and whatever. And
> then they started beating me up. It took them a minute to get me on the ground.
> They got me on the ground and then banged my head two times against the
> ground. I'm like, "I'm about to give up before my shit be all busted up." So I let
> them arrest me, whatever. And then I was tight. They had me sitting in there.
> They had me in some room and I was spitting all over. The cop said, "If you spit
> again, I'm gonna make sure you stop." I was like, "I don't care. I gotta spit."
> And I did spit. I had never been maced before. That shit hurt. That shit went up
> my nose.

While some—particularly those adults perpetuating the institutional discourses that

typecast these girls as anti-social and delinquent—would likely read this incident and

identify Nicole's truancy and assault on the police officer as those events on which

the larger incident turns, I suggest another reading, again drawing on Gregory

Bateson and his theorizing on patterns of cultural contact between "groups of

individuals, with different cultural norms of behavior."[255] Bateson proposes a

number of types of differentiation between groups, but the most germane to this

discussion is "symmetrical differentiation." According to Bateson, this category

includes two groups—A and B—which possess the same aspirations and the same

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[255] Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. 64-6.

behavior patterns, but are differentiated in the orientation of those patterns:

> Thus members of group A exhibit behavior patterns A,B,C in their dealings with each other, but adopt the patterns X,Y,Z in dealing with members of group B. Similarly, group B adopt the patterns A,B,C in their dealings among themselves, but exhibit X,Y,Z in dealing with group A. Thus a position is set up in which the behavior X,Y,Z is the standard reply to X,Y,Z. […] If, for example, the patterns X,Y,Z include boasting, we shall see that there is a likelihood, if boasting is the reply to boasting, that each group will drive the other into excessive emphasis of the pattern, a process which if not restrained can only lead to more and more extreme rivalry and ultimately to hostility and the breakdown of the whole system.[256]

Nicole's interaction with the police is an elegant illustration of this principal of symmetrical differentiation. The police station and truancy officers (group A) are located in the subway station, poised to arrest youth (dominant behavior). The group of teenagers (group B) is joking loudly about the officers (escalating dominant behavior). The officers (group A) react by handcuffing Nicole (escalating dominant behavior). Nicole responds in kind by shouting (escalating dominant behavior), but which is also—notably—calling attention to this context of symmetrical differentiation. She is then punished by the police (escalating dominant behavior). This symmetrical differentiation characterizes youth-authority interactions in school and in the community (recall Jessie's experience with the teacher, who grabbed her).

The crucial event in this incident, viewed from this angle, is the fact that the police are located in the station at all, followed by the truancy officer's misinterpretation of Nicole's original actions and quick escalation to pulling out handcuffs. Enraged over being misrepresented and misread, particularly in a way that had such serious repercussions, Nicole reacts in the way she has been primed to by her family, neighborhood, *and* institutional environments: with defensive physical

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[256] Ibid. 68.

violence. In another double-bind, Nicole is then *punished* for enacting the very response that has been modeled for her as appropriate, most recently by the officer himself. She is beaten, arrested, and then maced. Girls' failed schools and the entire apparatus surrounding them emerge as central to girls' contact with the criminal justice system, and pushing girls into increased police contact. Recall Nicole's learning environment, which she described as chaotic and unproductive. School officials, unable to gain control over her classroom, were so focused on maintaining some semblance of order that she felt unable to learn. Consequently, she left the classroom and went out into the hall. From there, it was a short jump to going late to school or just not attending at all. The result is that the bodies charged with "protecting" her—school and law enforcement—instead produce her as another "body," simultaneously objectifying her and exposing her to further violence.[257]

Girls' experiences of "stop-and-frisk" police policies, observing the ways police treat members of their communities, and the discourses surrounding police all conflate to produce a deep and largely justified distrust of the police among these young women. Nicole's invective was representative of many girls' feelings: "I hate cops. If I see a cop, I shoot a cop." On the surface, Nicole's immediate shift to violence would seem to bolster the popular culture depiction of young people as out-of-control and irrationally violent. Yet this stance reveals itself as one of defense rather than offense in the context of the severe and multifarious institutional and

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[257] In criminal justice system parlance, detainees are often referred to as "bodies." When they are "produced" from the precincts, Central Bookings, or Riker's, they are described in those terms (e.g. "How many bodies do we have today?" means "How many detained people are awaiting arraignment?"). This is yet another example of girls' institutional objectification.

structural violence she and other STARS girls experience, as the above story only begins to illustrate; in this context, it might profitably be read as a performance of the same posture of "preemptive action" that underlies "stop-and-frisk."

A New York Civil Liberties Union report explains the NYPD "stop-and-frisk" policy thusly: "to stop a person, a police officer must have reasonable suspicion the person has committed, is committing, or is about to commit an unlawful act. To conduct a frisk, however, the officer must have reason to believe the person stopped has a weapon that poses a threat to the officer's safety, a higher and more specific standard."[258] Over the last ten years, as part of a strategic NYPD initiative, stop-and-frisk incidents have increased by 705%. In 2002, New Yorkers were stopped by the police 97,296 times; in 2012, 685,724 times.[259] Of these stops, frisks were conducted in 381,704 of them—more than half. That weapons were found in only 1.9% of these frisks indicates the degree to which stopping and frisking young people has become unmoored from their actual criminal behavior and, instead, serves as a primary method by which young people of color are being pulled into the criminal justice system. In 70 of city's 76 precincts, black and Latino New Yorkers accounted for more than 50% of stops, and in 33 precincts they accounted for more than 90% of stops.[260] These arrests are concentrated unevenly in the very neighborhoods the

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[258] New York Civil Liberties Union, "Stop-and-Frisk 2011: NYCLU Briefing," (New York2011). 8.

[259] New York Civil Liberties Union, "Stop-and Frisk Campaign: About the Issue," http://www.nyclu.org/issues/racial-justice/stop-and-frisk-practices.

[260] New York Civil Liberties Union, "Stop-and-Frisk 2011: NYCLU Briefing." 2. See also Chang, "Alleged Illegal Searched by NYPD May Be Increasing Marijuana Arrests"; Chang, "Alleged Illegal Searches by NYPD Rarely Challenged in Marijuana Cases, Pt. 2".

STARS girls call home, which I looked at in-depth in the proceeding chapter.[261]

Young men of color are clearly the demographic most affected by this policing

approach; while Black and Latino men comprise only 4.7% of the city's population,

young men between the ages of 14 and 24, accounted for 41.6% of stops in 2011.[262]

However, young women of color are not excluded from this practice. In fact, girls

consistently reported incidents where they were stopped when doing nothing

explicitly illegal. Explained Maribel:

> My first arrest, I was in my friend's house, and he was selling weed and stuff and
> I didn't snitch him out. The cops stopped me in front of his building and said,
> "Oh, where coming from?" I was like, "My friend house." And they was like,
> "What apartment?" And I didn't want to snitch him out 'cause he had mad stuff
> in there, so I told them the wrong apartment. But they locked me up anyway,
> saying trespassing. I said, "I was just seeing a friend. I don't understand why you
> locking me up!" But they just locked me up anyway.

In another incident, Maribel described getting on a bus and dropping her metrocard.

"I was holding my cell phone in my hand, so I dropped it," she explained. A police

officer nearby "flipped out. He was like, 'Pick that up before you get a summons.'

I'm like, 'I'm about to pick it up.' And he's like, 'Excuse me. Do you hear me?'

I'm like, 'Calm down. I heard you.'" Like Nicole's experience with the truancy

officer and Jessie's experience with her middle school teacher, this is another

example of symmetrical differentiation and the double-bind that results from state

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[261] See Appendices B-D for maps of STARS' participants neighborhoods and those
most affected by stop-and-frisk policing and low-level marijuana arrests.
[262] "Injustices of Stop and Frisk," *The New York Times*, May 13 2012. The import of
this is revealed in an aside from a recent article on mass incarceration in the *New
Yorker*. Writes Adam Gopnick: "When the New York City police stopped and frisked
kids, the main goal was not to jail them for having pot but to get their fingerprints, so
that they could be identified if they committed a more serious crime." Adam
Gopnick, "The Caging of America: Why Do We Lock Up So Many People?," *The
New Yorker* 2012.

authority-figures engaging with girls in a behavioral pattern that assumes this

symmetrical dynamic at the same time they deny doing so. Despite Maribel's having

done nothing wrong (she was, after all, truly intending to pick up the metrocard), this

interaction could easily have resulted in her having been arrested.

When I asked, in one group interview, if any of the girls would ever call the

police in times of need, the response was unanimous, and revealed the true role of

"law and order" initiatives in communities of color:

> Nicole: I'll only call them if I'm dying, swear to God. Only if I'm dying. 'Cause in an emergency they'll really just take their time. And by the time they come, that person will be dead, all because of the cops. And the ambulance.

> Jessie: They took too long.

> Elise: So what role do you feel like they play in your community?

> Jessie: To catch you.

> Nicole: To get money. Yeah. They get on my nerves.

> Jessie: They be acting really crazy.

> Nicole: Especially on sweeps day.[263] They just want to get you for nothing. Any little thing! Littering.

> Jessie: Tuesday and Thursday is sweeps day. Everybody be on they tiptoes. And they just watch you for any little mistake. And they see any little thing and they picking you up.

> Nicole: Not even. They always watching. They'll sit back, parked up, with they lights off, middle of the night. Sometimes they'll have they lights on, and that's how you know it's them, down the block, catch them with they lights on. Cars all black. I'm telling you. And they sitting there, just watching the block. Last time? I got picked up for something and I thought I was going to the Bookings. They just drove around, parked up, waiting for something else to happen.

Girls see the police as out to get them, surveilling them to catch them for—as Jessie

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[263] "Sweeps" are organized efforts by the NYPD to make particular kinds of arrest, be they prostitution, drug sale or possession, or other offenses.

puts it, "any little mistake" rather than existing to protect them when they are

threatened by others, as I have demonstrated. In another group discussion, Michelle,

Stephanie, and Malika all articulated the same understanding. "We don't call the

cops. They're not rational. They just arrest everyone. You have to watch when and

where you call them." Here Malika accepts, and then flips the script ,on the

neoliberal premise that the system drives toward, or is even capable of, rationality.

As an illustration, Malika explained she was the one who called the cops in her

current case, and the one who ended up arrested. Girls' insurgent knowledge reveals

this simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility to the police, and this tension's

wider implications for them and their communities. Maribel explained it thusly:

> It's important, because if you see people getting jumped, what happens if it
> happens to you? Where are the cops gonna be? All over the place, probably
> worrying about somebody that's probably innocent. They always be in the wrong
> place at the wrong time. And then let's say that they stab you or shoot you. By
> the time they get there you gonna be dead, half dead.

In addition to being under constant surveillance, Maribel here articulates a very real

concern that even still she is unsafe in her community—not despite, but *because of,*

the increased police presence. Nicole's description of the police in "[c]ars all black

[…] sitting there, just watching the block," suggests that the relationship between

increased police presence and crime might even be inverted. That is, rather than a

unidirectional flow (increased crime means increased police presence), girls'

perspectives indicate that in fact increased police presence, particularly under the

practice of "broken windows" and "stop-and-frisk," generates increased crime.

Last year, New York City police officers stopped 46,784 women, frisking

nearly 16,000. Guns were found in only 59 cases.[264] So while women do represent a significantly lower percentage of stops than their male counterparts, the number of stops resulting in weapons seizures (.3%) remains consistent across genders. While they may be stopped less frequently than young men, the nature of those stops is, according to STARS participants, no less violent in nature. Natalia sees no difference between the way she and her male friends have been treated by police. "They yell at you, throw you against the wall, laugh in your face. They treat me like shit for no reason, yelling at me, telling me to get off the phone. They do that even when I haven't done anything wrong. They like to be violent to us."

Gender performance can have a dramatic and practical impact on the level of violence they are exposed to. When girls adopt an "AG" gender presentation, police often behave more aggressively toward them. Again, police assume a symmetrical relationship, but then, as a context, discipline girls precisely for acting as if they are in a symmetrical relationship. Nicole believed that police were "no different, no damn different" when it came to their methods of treating women versus men. "Especially when they see a young dyke like me. They think, 'Oh, she wanna be a man so we gonna treat her like a man.'" She drew a direct connection between the violent treatment she received at the hands of male police officers for being a "young dyke" and the treatment she received from her brother, who (as detailed in Chapter Three) "wash[ed]" her up for wanting "to be a big man." In both cases, one on the family level and one on the structural, Nicole was punished for subverting gender and

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[264] Wendy Ruderman, "For Women in Street Stops, Deeper Humiliation," *The New York Times*, August 7 2012. This article includes many examples of the way sexual harassment is leveraged by the police during routine stops.

sexuality norms (to say nothing of the assumptions embedded here about masculine experience.)

Girls can also, however, be disciplined when they physically perform "femininity" but their behavior, in various ways, subverts gendered expectations. Most often, this occurs when girls fight or, in Jessie's case, engage in prostitution. Two weeks before her anticipated graduation date, Malika, who had spent the majority of her time in the STARS program "inside," cut off from peers and community, was at a "picnic" in a park in Queens at four in the morning. One of the other female party-goers reportedly pulled out a knife and started cutting people at random. One of those people was Malika's friend. When the police report was called in, one of the details was that the girl was wearing yellow and white. When they arrived, the officers saw Malika, who was also wearing yellow and white, and hugging her friend, covered in blood. Mistaking her for the knife-wielding girl, the police officers immediately jumped on her and started hitting her. She was severely beaten by three officers. Frightened for her life, she reported to the STARS program staff, while the police had her on the ground and were beating and kicking her, Malika bit one of the officer's hands. As a result, she was charged both with the knife fight and with assaulting an officer. According to the STARS program coordinator, she ended up in the hospital on Riker's Island, with boot marks on her face, which was almost swollen beyond recognition. In this situation, the officers were so intent on subduing the alleged assailant that they had not even paused to ascertain that they had the right young woman. The similarities in dress and the fact that she was covered in blood were sufficient to spark a grossly inappropriate

response. While Malika was ultimately released on bail to her mother, she was charged (though failed to be indicted) with the crime, as I discuss later in this chapter.

Jessie, similarly, was disciplined by officers for violating gender and sexuality norms, but for a completely different reason and in a completely different fashion. She described repeated stops by officers while "working":

> One time, right, I was on the strip and [a group of undercover cops] pulled up in a yellow cab—in a yellow cab!—right in front of me. Like, "What the fuck?" "Get into the fucking cab." And I just walked away. I thought I was getting kidnapped! And then three cop cars pulled up out of nowhere. Searched my bag, "Do you have anything illegal?" I was so angry. "Do you do drugs?" I looked so young, 'cause I never put on no makeup. I was just always plain Jane. My hair—it was longer than this. So they looked at it like I was a runaway.

Jessie's fear that she is being kidnapped might, at first blush, appear rhetorical or even paranoid. Given the fact that she, along with many other STARS participants, had been the victim of an attempted kidnapping, stalking, and rape all at the hands of strange men reframes this as a totally rational fear. Moreover, it highlights the way the state reinforces and promotes community-level violence.

Because Jessie looked like "a runaway," the police shifted into a posture of (aggressive) paternalism: "They asked me, 'Oh, did your mom and your dad abuse you? Did they rape you? I'm gonna put your name in the system.' … They checked me for needle marks. And you know, I used to wear short skirts, so they checked me for needle marks behind my legs. They just said, 'Show me your arms.' And they shined their little flashlights and took a look." While she was not being physically assaulted, the police did violate her, both by inspecting her body and by leveraging their positions of power and Jessie's possible (indeed, unbeknownst to them actual) history of traumatization against her. Their behavior indicates that they are aware of

the social contexts of violence and addiction, but in this instance are at best indifferent to it, and at worst using it to pull her into the system. On other occasions, she told me, she was taken to the precinct "for my own protection." During the relatively short period of time that she was "prostituting," as she termed it, she accrued numerous arrests. But she explained that she avoided many more "'cause you flirt. And they're assholes."

This discomfiting conflation of paternalism and sexuality anticipates another way girls were exposed to abuse from the police. Many girls either had, or knew of friends who had, encountered an implicit or explicit threat of sexual violence during stops by police. For instance, during our group session on police, the girls started describing the vulnerability they feel once they have been taken into police custody. According to Nicole, one of her friends "was in the back of the [police] car and something happened. She had a fight and she was wildin'. She was banging her head on the car and the cops was like, 'Bitch, if you don't shut the fuck up we gonna take you to the back of this alley and we gonna get you. We gonna rape you.'" The potential of actual sexual victimization at the hands of police inflected Jessie's interactions with them as well, even in cases where on the surface the police did nothing wrong. "I was in the car once," Jessie explained, "and we stopped by the projects. I was like, 'Oh shit. They about to murder me.' But they just picked somebody else up. I was scared. I thought they was about to rape me or something. 'Cause you know, they pull up, do what they got to do, and then let you go." In the case of Jessie's friend, the "what they got to do" was abuse that arose out of a standard "stop-and-frisk":

I remember my homegirl got touched by the police that stopped her. She was just walking down the street and they decided to search her. They caressed her breasts, in between her thighs. She told and they didn't believe her. I was there with her when she went into the precinct. They were like "Do you want to go back and show us what happened?" She was like, "I can't go back to that. I can't." And just for the fact that she couldn't, they thought she was lying. But a trauma person doesn't have the willpower to go back. Only a person that didn't happen to can reenact the same thing. Come on.

Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems

As I outlined in this dissertation's introductory chapter, recent years have seen a significant shift in the approach to youth justice in New York. This process was sparked in 2006 by an ACLU/Human Rights Watch report detailing the disturbing conditions in two girls' placement facilities in upstate New York. The report noted that, in these facilities, "G[g]irls experience abusive physical restraints and other forms of abuse and neglect, and are denied the mental health, educational, and other rehabilitative services they need. Because of the facilities' remote locations, confined girls are isolated from their families and communities."[265] For officials at the national level, perhaps the most disturbing claims the report made were those detailing the excessive use of restraints and sexual abuse and humiliation by facility staff. The restraints to which girls referred were primarily the forcible face-down restraint, which involved staff seizing a girl from behind, pushing her face-down on the floor, pulling her arms behind her, and handcuffing her. This may or may not have included stepping on her back in the process. This restraint was reportedly used in numerous situations that did not suggest danger or threat to security, staff, or

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[265] Lewis, "Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls." 3.

residents, such as: failing to hold their hands behind their back in the prescribed

manner when standing in line; holding and waving a comb while speaking to a staff

member; failing to make their bed correctly; talking back to staff; not following

directions; refusing to go swimming; not raising their hands before speaking or

acting; being loud; and moving without permission.[266] This description recalls

vividly Foucault's description of Mettray, the first French detention center for

"delinquents" awaiting trail and who had been acquitted, a space in which were

"concentrated all the coercive technologies of behaviour. In it were to be found

'cloister, prison, school, regiment'" with the goal "to produce bodies that were both

docile and capable."[267] Here, the logic that governs much police-work—surveillance

and criminalization of mundane behaviors—extends into the prison, and vice-versa.

It is the logic of the system itself, and again, is social control not just in determining

the location of "bodies" but their behavior as well, the "discipline of being" Erving

Goffman identified.[268]

Advocates, who had long been concerned with these issues, seized upon this

report to bring attention to abuses. By 2009, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)

had conducted an extensive review of its own, this time actually being allowed inside

facilities, which documented similar problems. In addition to failing to provide

essential mental health and education services, the DOJ investigation uncovered

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[266] Ibid. 45.

[267] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 293-4. This point comes closest to representing the text's fundamental argument: that the prison represents a shift from bounded punishments of the body to insidious and consistent surveillance of the soul, with the single purpose of controlling deviance.

[268] Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Anchor Press, 1961). 188.

numerous reports of young people with "serious injuries . . . including concussions, broken or knocked-out teeth, and spiral fractures" at the hands of facility staff for such minimal behavior as "slamming the door, storming off, refusing to get dressed, refusing to stop laughing loudly, refusing to move, and glaring at staff."[269]

Hoping to mitigate the national embarrassment this investigation caused, Governor David Patterson convened a task force to conduct its own investigation, including recommendations for ways to bring New York more in line with juvenile justice reforms afoot nationally; that is, moving away from a purely punitive model and toward a "rehabilitative," youth-development model. Between then and now, numerous changes have been instituted. The number of young people placed in upstate facilities declined significantly, from 1,158 in 2007 to 650 in 2011. Under Department of Probation Commissioners Martin Horn and then Vincent Schiraldi, changes to the city's alternative-to-detention (ATD) program reduced the use of pre-trial detention for low-risk youth from 24% in 2007 to nine percent in 2011.[270] In an instance of the system making legible what it elsewhere chooses to ignore—that "bad kids"/criminals are also victims—in 2010 Mayor Michael Bloomberg decided to merge the Department of Juvenile Justice with the Administration for Children's Services, the city's child welfare agency, reflecting the high percentage of "cross-over youth" between the two systems. In 2011, he announced the decision to keep New York City youth out of the state's placement system altogether, opting instead to create a system of secure placement within the city. Jeremy Travis, President of the

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[269] Qtd. Jeremy Travis, "Reflections on Juvenile Justice Reform in New York," *New York Law School Law Review* 56(2011/2012). 1318.
[270] Ibid. 1319.

City University of New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Reforming Juvenile Justice, heralds these reforms as bringing New York into "conformance with professional and constitutional standards."[271] But professional standards are still those locked into a discourse of delinquency, where young people's experiences are pathologized and the goal is still to "get them back on track," as though being on the wrong track were simply a matter of poor decision-making. In this construction, girls are the objects of this sentence, with authority figures being the subject, illustrating the oxymoron of enforced empowerment. Indeed, almost in the same breath Travis notes the incredible violence young people face, and then reinforces the stalking-horse that:

> The public is, and should be, particularly concerned about youth crime. A lot of the public's concern is about what happens on the street; most of that involves young people and public violence. Those who advocate for better treatment of youth need to have an answer to the public's understandable concerns and questions. How will our proposals address the crime problem in our communities?[272]

Here Travis offers essentially a reprisal of the posture offered by the police in Jessie's account above: he demonstrates his familiarity with the social context for young people's involvement in the juvenile justice system and his insistent misinterpretation of it, by ultimately returning to framing it as a "crime problem."   He acknowledges the danger of the street, while ignoring the entire context of "the street." That this comes from the institutional head of the city's justice reforms is telling.

At the time of arrest, police have the discretion to give Family Court Appearance Tickets or Desk Appearance Tickets—in which case girls are released and told to return to court at a later date—or to detain. If girls were not given a

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[271] Ibid. 1319.
[272] Ibid. 1325-6.

Family Court Appearance Ticket or a Desk Appearance Ticket at the time they are arrested, but were held—depending on the nature of the case and the time and location of the arrest—this could have been at the local precinct, at Central Bookings in downtown Manhattan, (at the time this research was conducted) Bridges Juvenile Detention Center in the South Bronx, and/or on Riker's Island for as little as a few hours or until they were mandated to the STARS program.[273] If their cases went to trial rather than being resolved through a plea bargain relatively early in the life of the case, girls could conceivably have spent months in detention. In these facilities (as in their communities), girls were left to fend for themselves in matters ranging from the mundane—locating or creating their own toiletries—to the frightening—working out systems of self-protection. From the girls' perspectives, these facilities looked remarkably like the street; each, it seemed, instructed the girls about the other.

In our conversations, girls described facilities that were more in line with the findings of the ACLU/Human Rights Watch report than with Jeremy Travis' upbeat report on current conditions of youth justice. Describing one Brooklyn facility she had been in, Jessie told me that "the floors are like, you walk through, like you're going to go straight through it. It's wood. You know when you walk on a creaky floor or in an abandoned building and it feel like its gonna collapse? That's how it feel. It stink, when you're walking through the hallway." There is a stark irony here, considering the centrality of the "broken windows" theory governing policing and law and order in the city; from within the worldview of the neoliberal city, the sub-

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[273] Bridges Juvenile Detention Center was originally called Spofford Juvenile Detention Center before its renaming in the early 2000s (note here, again, the language of empowerment creeping in). Bridges was closed in 2011, after almost a decade's worth of promises by the city.

standard facilities support and generate chaos rather than diminish it. Most of the STARS participants I worked with had been arrested before; about half had been detained. For Malika, the experience of being held on Riker's Island was a shock. During our conversation she contradicted herself multiple times, at first telling me that the experience was unsettling but not "scary." But as we talked further, she revealed the following:

> And they was, I don't know who, when there was a fight in there, they had to restrict privileges. I was so scared. That was my first time, and I was crying and they was telling me to "Shut up and stop crying" and I'm like "What is going on?" I was asleep and I didn't even know they had a fight. That was the worst, I remember that.

Malika, who had never been either arrested or detained prior to the case that brought her to STARS, had no idea what to expect and was clearly shaken by some of the standard operating procedures that more seasoned girls were able to take in stride.

On Riker's Island, all the women are held in the same facility, Rose M. Singer Center. Regardless of their ages, girls who are arrested at the age of 16 or older are kept with all the women currently in detention on "the island." In the juvenile system, which houses children as young as 11, judges can order that a young person be held in either non-secure, limited-secure, or secure detention, or leave that determination to facilities staff (at the time this research was conducted, DJJ, now under recent reforms, ACS). The non-secure facilities are essentially group homes, while the limited-secure and secure detention facilities have much in common with Riker's, including cells, razor wire, and other security measures. Commenting on New York's detention centers, one Supreme Court Justice said that, "fairly viewed, pretrial detention of a juvenile gives rise to injuries comparable to those associated

with the imprisonment of an adult."[274] Nicole had experience with each security-level of detention, but was particularly frustrated by her experience at one of the secure facilities, when the lack of supplies and baldly punitive orientation of the facility— and its similarities to Riker's—became particularly apparent.

> Nicole: And then they try to tell me I have to wash with my sock. Come on! How you tell me that?
>
> Cherry: They didn't give you a rag?
>
> Nicole: They didn't give me no rag. They didn't give me nothing. It was awful.
>
> Jessie: They didn't give us a rag at Riker's either. We used to cut a square out of our towel, just rip it, to have a washrag. And they would give us a pillowcase and no pillow. I remember when I first got there we were like, "Ooh shit, they give us a pillow, too?" And then no fucking pillow, just the case!

Noting the absurdity of Jessie's story, Nicole observed a small but potent example of systemic incoherence/contradiction, "So what the hell is the point of the whole pillowcase?"

Sometimes, as with the examples above, the bureaucracy of the facilities is absurd, even darkly comic; all the girls laughed at Jessie's story. But the fact remains that Nicole being told to use her sock as a washcloth, and women at Riker's routinely ripping their towels to create washcloths and being given pillowcases but no pillows all evince the intentional humiliation and aggressive deprivation that underlies the experience of detention (and, again, echoes experience in the community under neoliberalization). Jessie explained further, "At Riker's you get that case number, you identified by a number. Just like when you use the phone you have to punch the

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[274] Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg, "The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities," (The Justice Policy Institute, 2007). 2.

number into the phone, your ID." She added, "Nobody care about you—you're just that number."

Perhaps the most defining quality of detention or incarceration for girls, however, was the violence to which it exposed them, from staff and from other prisoners. Girls responded to that violence with a combination of avoidance and compensatory violence. Both were necessary for them, quite literally, to survive. It will come as no surprise that detention/jail (pre-trial) and placement/prison (post-trial) facilities are profoundly unsafe. Mishi Faruquee, a prison reform advocate, detailed conditions she and her colleagues at the Correctional Association found while interviewing young people detained at Riker's Island:

> Youth consistently reported that staff instigate, perpetuate, sanction or ignore much of the violence in the dormitories. Because there is only one correctional officer patrolling each dormitory containing up to 50 prisoners, the staff members rely on the cooperation of the prisoners to maintain some semblance of order in the housing areas. In the adolescent units, this dynamic takes on a particularly insidious form. We have received dozens of independent accounts from youth that staff in effect appoint a few youth to serve as "teams" that maintain control of the dormitory. Youth reported to us that staff members allow gang-affiliated youth and/or youths with the toughest reputations for fighting to control other prisoners in the dormitories.[275]

This testimony was delivered to the New York City Department of Corrections in 2009—the point at which New York's juvenile facilities were under their most intense national scrutiny—when that department was contemplating budget cuts that would have increased the prisoner/staff ratio from 50/1 to more than 60/1. In yet another kind of schizophrenic approach to discipline—recalling similar situations in the public education system—staff in juvenile facilities both look the other way

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[275] *Testimony of Mishi Faruqee, Director of the Juvenile Justice Project, Correctional Association of New York, Regarding the Proposed Amendments to the Minimum Standards for New York City Correctional Facilities*, April 17 2007. 3.

during altercations, allowing young people to self-govern, and overreact to minor rule

infractions. In its report on Lansing and Tryon placement facilities, the

ACLU/Human Rights Watch described facilities where staff also exposed girls to:

> a range of sexually abusive behaviors. HRW/ACLU documented three specific cases over the past five years of staff having sexual intercourse with girls. Sexual abuse short of intercourse also occurs in the facilities, ranging from verbal innuendo, to observation of girls in states of undress by male staff, to unwanted touching. Girls also report that staff make publicly humiliating comments revealing girls' past sexual history, or experience of abuse, or a medical condition such as infection with a sexually transmitted disease. Lesbians as well as girls who do not conform to staff stereotypes of girlish behavior are sometimes harassed by staff and other girls.[276]

 Like their police counterparts, then, these findings suggest girls are also disciplined

by corrections staff for their deviations from traditional gender performances,

whether rejecting unwanted sexual advances, revealing a history of sexual abuse or

violence, presenting as an "AG," or being lesbian or "gay."   These findings also

suggest, clearly, that staff members are disciplined by the system that surrounds them.

While the STARS girls did not identify lack of staff or outright staff abuse as

a specific concern of theirs, they did recount story after story about the brutality they

encountered while in jail. In the following exchange, Jessie and Nicole discuss their

experiences, Jessie at Riker's and Nicole at Central Bookings.

> Jessie: We had to fight to get an extra phone. We got crazy! I was on the phone and one girl said, "Yo, get off the phone or I'm gonna bang the phone"—yank the phone cord to hang it up.

> Nicole: That's just like Bookings. We gotta fight.

> Jessie: You gonna bang my call? I'll break this phone!

> Nicole: I bang your head. That's what I would have said. I'm gonna bang your

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[276] Lewis, "Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls." 5.

head, soon as you bang this phone.

Jessie: So she pulled my phone cord and I just slammed the phone on the floor. I was like, "Guess what? Nobody using the phone now." She was sick. Everybody was tight. She shouldn't have banged my phone call. I don't care! I will pop off. I don't give a fuck.

Nicole: I would have banged her head. I remember this white guy, I kept getting phone calls, this white guy was like, "I'm about to hang up your call." I was like, "Go ahead. I dare you." I was about to snuff him. But he didn't do it. I was waiting. They was gonna give me a shot. I didn't want a shot. That was crazy.

J: I almost got into a fight in the bookings. I was wearing high, high heels, stiletto heals? And this girl, she said something to me and I took off my shoe and I threatened her with it like it was a gun. Put my heel right by her head, "Girl, I'll put this right through your forehead. You better cut it out."

Jessie's and Nicole's experiences indicate how extensively girls are left to fend for themselves, and how they are primed by threats into behavioral patterns of escalation. The import of seemingly small interactions like hanging up on someone else's call, which elsewhere might be considered rude but perhaps not immediately rise to a physical altercation, in this context assume significant contours. In the context of institutional life, hanging up someone else's phone call effectively terminates her only life-line to the outside world, a critical link to the community and those supports she calls upon with her "one call."

Girls had various methods for coping with this violence. Some girls, like Malika, isolated themselves from the general population as much as possible, hoping that by keeping to themselves they would be able to successfully avoid confrontations from which they could not safely back down (notably, the same strategy of being "inside" they use in their communities). Other tactics included playing into gender roles. Jessie, who used flirting with police officers to avoid additional charges, found ways to parlay her physical attractiveness into benefits while on Riker's as well. In

the following exchange she and Nicole discuss their methods of dealing with the violence they encountered.

> Jessie: I'll tell you what, though. If you're a pretty girl, you get privileges, I'll tell you that.
>
> Nicole: Conceited ass.
>
> Jessie: Conceited! Huh—I'm right, that's what. They give me privileges. I be like, "What you gonna give me?" When I went to court I used to get commissary from the boys. I used to get my potato chips. [Laughs] You got to survive. It's a jungle in there. Just like the streets.
>
> Nicole: It's worse!
>
> Elise: Why do you say its worse?
>
> Jessie: 'Cause everything is available to you. So it's just like—
>
> Nicole: Just like the 'hood. Everybody wanna fight. Everybody wanna talk this and that. I swear.

As an AG, Nicole did not have the same option (or desire) to use flirtation with male guards and inmates in the same manner as Jessie did, with her more traditional performance of femininity. The sub rosa tension over these differing power dynamics emerges in Nicole calling Jessie out for being conceited. Regardless of gender presentation, however, both girls agree that fighting is a necessity. Jessie's and Nicole's insurgent knowledge frames these detention facilities—and, recalling Anaya's earlier observations, schools—as being "just like the streets" and "the 'hood," that is, as another face of the same, larger system.

It is not uncommon for girls to get lost in this "jungle," such that their parents or family can't locate them, sometimes for days at a time. Following the incident in the park, when she was beaten by police and then arrested for a crime more than 20 witnesses were willing to testify she had not committed, Malika was again held at

Riker's, this time at the hospital due to the severity of her injuries. This illustrates another extension of the system, another instance where the congruence of victim and criminal is legible. Following the court appearance at which she was not ultimately indicted, she was scheduled to be released first thing the next morning. According to STARS staff, however, Riker's staff gave Malika's mother "the runaround," first saying that they could not find Malika's paperwork, then saying she had already been released and gone home. When Malika's mother returned home, after hours spent at Riker's trying to track her daughter down, she found that Malika was not in fact there as she had been told. Malika was eventually released the next morning. Jessie had a similar experience. When her mother went to post bail so Jessie could be released, her mother was told she was not being held at Riker's. "And they didn't release me until two weeks later," she explained. "So I was an illegal inmate from that point on."

Shuttled back and forth between detention and court, girls are caught between, on one side, "the jungle" that exists in facilities, and on the other, judges whose race, class, gender, and sexuality social locations mean they often do not understand or recognize as valid the complications in girls' lives. As a result, girls anticipate, here and elsewhere, being punished for the mechanisms they use to keep themselves and their families safe. Take, for example, status offenses. Legal reforms in the late 1990s mean that girls who run away from home, are disobedient, or break curfew, for instance, are no longer supposed to be placed in custody. Practically speaking, however, these "offenses" often result in young women in particular being

detained.[277] Staff at the STARS program, and even the girls themselves, were—in the

neoliberal language of efficiency—constantly reminding themselves and one another

to just "do what you have to do." Judges often remanded girls who tested positive for

drugs, even for marijuana. Those who had consistently positive urine tests were often

sent to residential drug treatment programs by STARS to bypass being resentenced to

prison for violating program rules. Similarly, girls have to be employed or in school

in order to successfully complete the STARS program. This is not, however,

something that STARS developed in a vacuum. As the program's coordinator

explained to me, "I have to tell them, 'Now it's serious, because before when you

didn't go to school your mother would yell at you. Now if you don't go to school you

can't go—the judge might just put you in jail, 'cause they figure you're not doing

anything, you're—you're liable to get in trouble.' You know, 'What are you doing

with your time all day?'" Here, picking up on the meta-message of the court, the

program coordinator reacts preemptively, mirroring the same preemption exercised

through "stop-and-frisk." Recall Jessie's judge's frustration that the program did not

have a full-time staff person dedicated to connecting her with employment.[278] Rules

about education and employment—imposed by and large by judges and carried out by

programs with little discretion or ability to push back—rest on the assumption that the

system is fully functional and that girls must be somehow aberrant to be out of school

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[277] Ibid. 4.

[278] The STARS program did, in fact, connect girls to an onsite, mixed-gender job-training program that culminated in a paid internship opportunity. Because Jessie had a daughter whom she had to pick up from daycare in the evenings, she was unable to attend programming, which was designed to accommodate the schedules of program participants enrolled in traditional education settings. Her critique of STARS was accurate, however, insofar as it did not have a job developer who located employment for participants aside from those who completed this job-training program.

and out of work, rather than the system itself being aberrant and the girls functioning logically within its framework. Further, this ideological orientation locates the aberration—spatially—in their bodies. Jessie put it succinctly, telling me, "Like, the judge is out there. They should know how it feels to be a convicted felon. You understand what I'm saying? They have to do they job, but at the end of the day we don't have what we need to work."

Young people are not the only ones who are held accountable for situations that are often beyond their control. So are parents. The program coordinator explained that she goes out of her way to bring girls' parents or caretakers into the process.

> I identify with their pain, and they know that I'm being sincere in what they're going through…. I pay attention to their pain—what they're going through, because usually everybody's looking at the—at the child and never, you know, acknowledging the parents and what the parent's been through, through all of this crisis like going to court. They're embarrassed of standing in front of a judge, and the judge yelling at you and telling you you're not a good parent 'cause the kid got arrested. And meanwhile you're working so hard, and, you know, they need help, you know, paying their way, trying to give the best that you can. You know, a single parent, what else are you gonna do?

The judge's paternalism—which girls have described in their experiences—is here revealed to be a characteristic of parents' experiences of their daughters' court-involvement as well, underlining its systemic nature. Notably, the program coordinator references "single parent" here, not "parents," but elects to strip it of its gender components, as well as place it within its social context. Like the girls themselves, the program coordinator reveals a more nuanced understanding of the pressures acting on girls and their families, and actively subverts the racialized and gendered overtones of the inner-city, single mother. Judges' conceptions of a

properly functioning home life, however, are not nearly so nuanced and become essential determinants of whether a girl is detained or not. If a judge feels that a girl is beyond parental control, he or she will often detain or even place her.

But as Malika's experience illustrates, almost none of the events that brought her within a hair's breadth of being sent to prison for 3-10 years were of her choosing. She was a good student, working double-time to graduate high school early to get away from all the "he say she say and nonsense"—which she did. At the end of her school year, however, she was attacked by 14 girls over "gossip, they thought I thought I was better than them." Malika's explanation of the context for the fight illustrates the double-bind girls are in socially: both attempting to stay out of trouble *and* engaging in patterns of escalating aggression ultimately lead to violence. In an attempt to defend herself, she grabbed the closest item to hand—scissors—and blindly swung, catching one of her assailants in the eye. At first, Malika explained, "my judge, he was really strict for the case that I have because uh, a young lady had her eye taken out because they jumped me, and I was scared of consequences." As she worked consistently to "do what she had to do" and "after he, at the end he found out more about the case, and he started to be lenient with me after a while and he gave me the program." Double-meanings abound in this description; Malika's fear of consequences and doing what she needed to do refers both to employing violence to protect herself and submitting herself to the will of the court, as well as shifting to perform compliance. No one in Malika's family had been court-involved before, and the effects of her involvement on her mother in particular were many. "My mother, she lost weight. She had hair fell out. She was stressed because she never been

through anything like this. I'm trying to push it to the side, but I can't. It was devastating. Very." As in Chapter Three, Malika assumes responsibility for vulnerable family members, showing herself to be highly attuned to her mother's mental state. This kind of attunement to the "me of me" is, however, precisely the kind of thing no one appears to offer her. Certainly not the institutions that encounter her.

Conclusion

Girls' involvement in multiple systems means they are caught at the nexus of irresolvable *structural* tensions they have no power to resolve (e.g. court vs. school, school vs. public housing regulations). As city governance and policy falls more and more squarely in line with neoliberalism's internal contradictions around "control," "order," "power," and ultimately, "the subject," girls are simultaneously more likely to receive messages that individualize their experiences of structural violence and more likely to be failed by institutions that previously offered at least nominal support in the form of public assistance, education, and housing. Meanwhile, those systems that have historically posed the most threat to communities of color—i.e. policing and the justice system—continue to radically threaten, discipline, and contain girls; indeed, they do so even more as girls are increasingly pushed out of the mainstream economy by failing schools and poor job opportunities and pulled into the justice system.

Girls' descriptions of their experiences in school, with the police (both in school and in their communities), in court, and in detention reflect the same sense of

vulnerability girls feel at home and in their communities: the conviction that, as

Michelle described it, "it's a case of survival of the fittest." The cultural and

ideological templates absorbed by and incorporated into neoliberalization during its

tactical advance in the mid-'90s (e.g., the imagery of welfare reform), still shape the

institutional assumptions of the "school-to-prison pipeline" about girls and the

disciplinary measures those assumptions lead to. Institutions, implicitly and

explicitly, send girls messages that they alone have the power to transform

themselves from Welfare Queens-in-waiting to "successful" entrepreneurial

individuals even as, via double-binds, institutional co-constitution and neoliberal

policy make the latter (vexed) goal less attainable with every "intervention." Girls'

insurgent knowledge reveals a more pervasive kind of "social control" than that

articulated by some academics, including Michelle Alexander, one with includes not

just control of "bodies," but (inept) attempts to control souls as well.

Chapter Six
Conclusion

'Neoliberalism' is sometimes written about as though there is an automatic transmission belt from some ethereal sphere of greater forces to 'how it plays out on the ground.' It is not so. There are indeed pressures and constraints, often of immense power, but there are also agents who play along, or resist, or struggle mightily. There is room for political intervention.

-Doreen Massey[279]

Many, even survivors, rarely discuss or engage the events that highlight their vulnerability to violence. Those who do might find that sharing stories provides an essential narrative, an ethical text that deprivatizes pain to border-cross into public activism.

-Joy James[280]

The values of the courtroom and criminal justice system—being a productive participant in society and living a law-abiding life—seem straightforward and commonsensical to those who are part of the system. From this perspective, criminals—at best—have made poor choices and—at worst—have elected to live amoral and antisocial lives. Within this framework, it is the role of the court, prisons, and the institutions that surround them to hold them accountable for breaking the laws, usually through the punishments of community service (forced labor) or incarceration (forced detainment). There is a growing trend among youth justice advocates and reformers to discuss system-involvement and particularly incarceration

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[279] Massey, *World City*. 11.
[280] James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, & Race in U.S. Culture*. 153.

as "iatrogenic," a cure that makes the problem worse.[281]   Educational researchers have found that upwards of 40% of incarcerated youth have a learning disability, and that they face significant challenges returning to school after they leave detention. Economists have shown that the process of incarcerating youth reduces their future earnings and their ability to remain in the workforce, potentially making formerly detained youth into less stable employees.[282]   Youth who have been detained or incarcerated also have a significantly higher mortality rate than the general population, including homicide-related deaths; this increase in mortality rate disproportionally impacts youth of color and female youth.[283]   As previously noted, young people have the highest suicide rates of all inmates in jails, being 19 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population, and are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in adult jail facilities than in juvenile justice facilities.[284] Keeping girls out of the criminal justice system, then, is quite literally a matter of life and death.

By privileging court-involved girls' narratives and analysis of their own lives, I offer an angle of approach that differs from traditional criminological and sociological studies of court-involved youth, one that casts their criminal behavior in a very different light. As I sat and coded, re-coded, and analyzed my data from over 130 hours of interviews with girls and observation of the STARS program, violence

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[281] Prisco, "When the Cure Makes You Ill: Seven Core Principles to Change the Course of Youth Justice." 1434.
[282] Holman and Ziedenberg, "The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities." 2.
[283] Prisco, "When the Cure Makes You Ill: Seven Core Principles to Change the Course of Youth Justice." 1436-7.
[284] Arya, "Jailing Juveniles: The Dangers of Incarcerating Youth in Adult Jails in America." 4.

emerged as the through-line in all the spheres they inhabited, and at the core of every relationship, be it as presence or absence. Girls' own violent behavior, far from aberrant, was in fact *totally logical* within the contexts in which they operated. Although ample literature exists on domestic and community-level violence, these stop short of articulating what the STARS girls' stories and descriptions revealed: that violence was in fact a central organizing principal of their daily existence. This violence surfaced a foundational logic of their family, romantic, social, spatial, and institutional lives. It created numerous articulations of what I have called "the logic-of-violence double-bind"—instances where girls were confronted with competing messages and contexts (at least one of which threatened or involved violence), and where to acknowledge the disjunction would itself provoke further, punitive violence.

This pervasive violence and vulnerability is at right angles with the ways girls are commonly depicted in traditional political and juridical discourses (as out of control); traditional criminological and sociological discourses (as anti-social and deviant); critical-theoretical discourses that look at violence as structural; and neoliberal updates of these discourses, in which girls are seen as unencumbered free agents, making "bad choices." In the last sixty years, sociologists and criminologists have grown increasingly interested in pin-pointing the social factors leading to criminal behavior; feminist criminologists in understanding women's experiences of violence; and anthropologists in using "street anthropology" to record the worlds of those engaged in crime and violence. Under neoliberalism, each of these discourses contributes to an elaborate form of projection, wherein features of an uncontrollable and in many ways anti-social system are localized in these girls.

Scant attention has been paid to the complex experiences of violence among girls of color. For years, Beth Richie's *Compelled to Crime* was an outlier, as one of the few feminist criminological studies that framed Black female crime intersectionally, and attempted to remove the patina of pathology from its analysis of battered Black women. Richie writes:

> Every day in this country some women are coerced or forced by circumstances into doing things they don't want to do. For many women, it is the only static condition of their ever changing lives: to regularly feel required to make hard choices among, at times, very poor options. This situation forces some of us to assume a posture in the world that isn't in our best interest, or we betray ourselves for the good of others by acting in ways or living in relationships that don't serve us well.[285]

Her larger argument is that some Black women are backed into situations with few choices as a result of complex socio-cultural forces resulting from the white supremacist patriarchy. The women her study examines are victims of what Richie calls "gender entrapment": the ways in which "gender, race/ethnicity, and violence can intersect to create a subtle, yet profoundly effective system of organizing women's behavior into patterns that leave women vulnerable to private and public subordination, to violence in their intimate relationships and, in turn, to participate in illegal activities."[286] Richie's recent work begins the important work of tracing the overrepresentation of LGBTQ girls in the criminal justice system, and argues (if it doesn't explore in detail) the connection between neoliberal policies and many Black women's multi-level exposure to violence. In the last year, intersectional analysis of court-involved women of color has become increasingly the subject of academic

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[285] Richie, *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered Black Women*. 1.
[286] Ibid. 3.

inquiry, but more work is needed if the tide of women and girls being incarcerated (as I have noted, now the fastest-growing demographic of detainees) is to be stemmed.

The stories of the young women in this research project suggest Richie's observation remains as true today as it was nearly 20 years ago; the interplay of gender, race and/or ethnicity, plus sexuality, class, geography, and violence (elements she added to her 2012 study) were central to the narratives of the STARS participants, many of whom faced an array of constantly changing circumstances—often violent— that compelled and propelled them to "criminal" behavior. Serious, ongoing violence at home—emotional, physical, and verbal abuse—often caused young women to seek bell hooks' "[where the] "me of me matters" outside the context of their biological families. Yet, whether with romantic partners or peers, these relationships were ultimately similarly violent. Girls' descriptions of their romantic relationships were full of mistrust, betrayal, threats, and intimate partner violence. Messages girls received from parents and partners objectified and sexualized them; parents and partners punished girls when they asserted their subjectivity and agency. This punishment re-inscribed the objectification and sexualization girls sought to escape, reflecting objectified (often sexualized) identities back to them—"slut," "whore," "drug-addict," "trick," "pop," "lazy," etc. Yet where even most of the intersectional, critical scholars exploring these relationships draw conclusions about the systemic nature of this violence, what they see as reduced or "poor choices," I see as logical double-binds, and the neoliberal economic and cultural regime offloading its frictions and flashpoints to the margins of the metropole.

As members of communities both social and spatial, girls continued to struggle to find support and safety. The "inside"/ "outside" discourse they described provided the space-based logical framework through which they experienced their peer networks, and, ultimately, the physical spaces of their communities. Girls described the near impossibility of moving through their communities without encountering some form of violence, often resorting to violence to protect themselves. Sometimes these violent interactions were with other girls (individually or in groups), who wanted to fight them for their material possessions, to build their own reputations, or to punish girls who "thought they was better." Sometimes these interactions were with adult men, often strangers, who verbally abused them, or threatened or enacted sexual violence. Sometimes they were with gangs, which promised physical protection and safety, but often increased girls' exposure to violence without delivering on the promises of increased protection. And often they were with a temporally unfixed general, random violence, intimately tied to the physical landscape, reflected in girls' individual and collective memories of past brutality and expectations of future brutality. Many girls resorted to a simultaneous physical and social isolation—being "inside"—as an attempt to avoid these violent altercations and the likelihood of their increased contact with the criminal justice system.

Violent double-binding is an intrinsic component of girls' institutional experiences as well. Each of the major engines of neoliberal public policy they encounter—schools, the child welfare system, public housing, employment, the police, courts, and prison—encounters the STARS girls in a similarly binding way,

making them hypervisible as objects (deviant bodies in need of control) and invisible as subjects, while insisting on "choice," "accountability," and the like. More broadly, these institutions simultaneously construct the "need" for administration of young women of color and adopt a posture of resentment at having to administer them.

These pervasive and traumatizing double-binds underlie the gender entrapment STARS girls experienced. As Laurie Schaffner has described it, the lives of court-involved young women are "filled with abuse and exploitation, hypereroticization, as well as an increased level of socially sanctioned violence—that is, violence that they experienced but in which the state did not intervene."[287] Were I to step into the role of clinician, like Shaffner, I might suggest that many court-involved young women (indeed, all those who participated in my study) are trauma survivors whose violent behaviors—rather than anomalous—are in fact essential tools for survival, strategic decisions made among an array of bad choices. As previously noted, Traci L. West suggests that many Black women who have been victimized "are compelled to assume the qualities of shamefulness and invisibility," responses that "further contribute to their emotional and spiritual trauma."[288] Girls' strategies of being "inside" and of isolation are proximate to this shame and invisibility. But in the "outside" context of physical or virtual proximity to others, one of the STARS girls' primary methods of exercising their own agency was to shift. Recall here Michelle and Stephanie's strategic shifting , their "smiling.".

Therefore, when the court asks girls to comply with mandates grounded in a neoliberal ideological framework, it is not merely inconvenient for them, nor is it

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[287] Schaffner, *Girls in Trouble with the Law.* 7.
[288] West, *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics*. 2.

even "setting them up to fail," as some progressives in the court-reform world put it. It is repeating the objectification—the essential denial of their material reality—and reinscribing the violence they encounter on a daily basis. The court is compelling them to "smile," at the expense of their experienced realities and further compounding their "emotional and spiritual trauma."

The violence girls experience is not ancillary to their criminal behavior. It is intimately and etiologically involved in that behavior, and in the cultural production of girls of color as "deviant." In perhaps the greatest double-bind of all, girls are socialized to expect violence and to respond to that violence, or that threat of it, with additional violence. When they do so, they are punished, often violently. This is not merely family or community violence. It is always already institutional violence. But only the girls themselves seem to recognize this. As Jessie and Nicole observe, "the streets," "the hood," and the neoliberal institution are interchangeable.

What all this data indicate is that the violence girls experience is *systemic*, i.e., perpetuated by a system. The interpenetrating spheres of neoliberal policy, economics, and culture sanction this violence in one sense even as they sanction it in another, opposite sense. The double-binds that confront girls as a consequence of this ill/logic gesture toward the inherent pathology of the neoliberal enterprise itself. As Jamie Peck and Adam Teckell have argued, neoliberalization is "contradictory, it tends to provoke countertendencies."[289] Its pathological contradictions— independence and dependence; violence and nonviolence; invisibility and

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[289] Peck and Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space." 383.

hypervisibility; aggression and docility; subjectivity and objectivity—find eloquent expression in these girls' anger.

And yet, in the face of this systemic schizophrenia, girls engage in countless acts of resistance, large and small. The intimate spaces of their bedrooms assert complex interiority, and girls insist on seeing themselves as beings in relation to others around them—as mothers, sisters, cousins, girlfriends, "wives," daughters, friends—notwithstanding the violence that often colored those relationships. They cherish close friendships, and work to insulate younger siblings and cousins from the pressures they themselves feel so acutely. Girls' insurgent knowledge of the enjambment of these values with their experiences of violence and vulnerability were clearly reflected in a group mural project Jessie, Maribel, Cherry, and Nicole did with the STARS program's art therapist. They decided to do a mural project that would essentially collage images of femininity, or womanhood. In fact, this enterprise mirrored the cultural and identity work girls undertook privately through similar collaging on their bedroom walls, but with a twist. Here, they're "shifting" it, bringing the inside to a new outside space of shared subjectivity, no longer addressing only themselves. And this is their idea, their desire, according to the dialogue that follows:

> Cherry: It was my idea. [The art therapist] wanted to do a project but she didn't know what to do. I told her we should do a collage thing, put all the pictures together and she said, "Alright." So we all agreed and we did that.
>
> Maribel: So then we had to pick two pictures and two words that symbolized what your picture means.
>
> Jessie: I picked the man and the baby and the—what is that—a dog or a teddy bear?

Elise: Looks like a teddy bear. And your words were what?

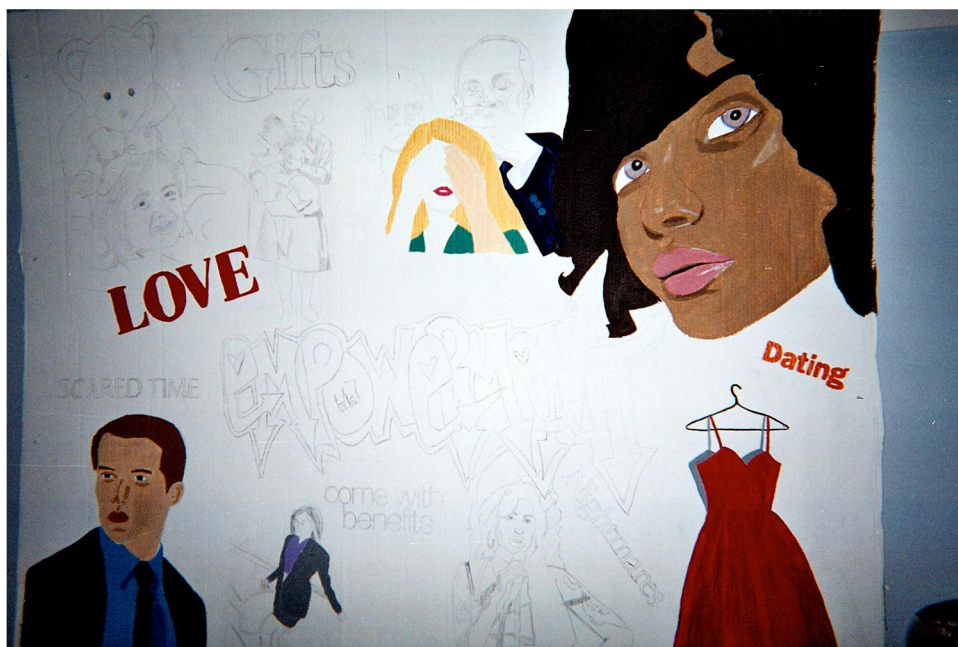Jessie: "Love" and "scared time." I think so.

Figure 23: Group mural in its early stages

Figure 24: Group mural project near completion

Elise: And yours were—

Maribel: Me was a woman with a baby on her arm and I picked "Come with benefits," because having a kid means you have more responsibilities. And then I picked a woman with a business suit. Good for her! Wait I think I mixed up the words. The woman with the baby is "Gifts" and the woman with the business suit is "Come with benefits."

Elise: And what are those benefits to you?

Maribel: 'Cause I know before women didn't have the right to work or anything. Now we have the privilege to work, so that's the benefits.

Cherry: I picked the dress and Amy what's-she-called? Amy Winehouse. And my words are "Dating" and "Nightmare."

Elise: How come you picked her?

Cherry: 'Cause she's a drug addict, something like that. Some of the girls, that's a problem. Guys too, but girls more. Because then it leads to other stuff.

Jessie: Nicole picked that big-headed girl in the corner, and "Hear no evil, see no evil."

Maribel: Then we put all those in the order that we was going to put the pictures and everybody picked their own corners.

Jessie: And then we moved them all around. When we put them down first we didn't have "Empowerment." When we put "Empowerment" up it wasn't exactly where we wanted it to be, because her face was always there.

Elise: How did you come up with that word?

Maribel: I drew it.

Jessie: She drew it, but we all thought of it.

Maribel: All the artwork is, like, mad detailed. It takes a lot of time. It's like a collage, except you're drawing it instead of just arranging the pictures. So it was hard. It has a story behind it, obviously.

Elise: So then you came up the three of you came up with "Empowerment?"

Jessie: I thought about it, we agreed on it, and then she decided to draw it.

Elise: And how did you come up with the hearts?

Maribel: I don't know. I usually do that when I draw. And in the old, it had like, I drew like a TV coming up. That's how you know [a drawing is] mine.

Jessie: And she put a little house in the middle of, what, the P?

Maribel: The O. Instead of the TV like I usually do—to me that means, "Don't watch me, watch TV"—so instead of doing that I drew the houses. I'm also going to get that tattooed. See how I do a TV at the top? [Drew an example on paper.] I do that everywhere. TV doesn't mean empowerment, so I did houses.

I've quoted this exchange at such length because in it, we can see girls synthesizing so many of the themes I have discussed in the previous chapters.

The images and phrases girls selected to represent their experiences as women quite literally illustrate how the vulnerability they feel and the violence they experience are jumbled up with hope and feelings of connection—how tendencies give rise to countertendencies. Jessie, for instance, selected both "love," which she paired with a photo of a smiling woman (presumably a mother) with a teddy bear on her shoulders, and "scared time," which she paired with a photo of a man. Notably, the actual phrase she'd torn out of a magazine said "sacred time." Her repeated reading of that as "scared time," suggests the extent of her associations of vulnerability with gendered violence.

Nicole paired "Beautiful" and "Dreams" with an image of a young, Black woman. Her second photo made visual representation of the phrase "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." Her first pairing is yet another assertion of girls' worth, interiority, and subjectivity; the young woman in the picture is both beautiful and in possession of dreams. Given that Nicole identifies as AG, this image might also be read as a public declaration and claiming of this sexual identity and her own dreams

of a "beautiful" future relationship. Her second image—the trio of people covering, alternatingly, their eyes, ears, and mouth—can be read as a visual manifestation of the logic-of-violence double-bind.

Cherry's words—"Dating" and "Nightmare"—are suggestive even without the images that accompany them, gesturing toward the violence and vulnerability girls report in their romantic relationships. Cherry paired "Dating" with a long, red, formal dress on a hanger. That this particular dress is on a hanger, rather than on a girl actually on a date or with a partner, gestures toward a posture of anticipation of rather than participation in an idealized, upper-class adult life. Cherry's explanation of "Nightmare" ties girls' struggles with drug use to a whole constellation of "other stuff," reflecting the complicated causality behind an entire set of behaviors typically either criminalized or pathologized in a world of luxury.

A mother and a baby and a woman in a suit were Maribel's selections. Her initial connection of the woman and baby with "Come with Benefits" rather than "Gift"—"because having a kid means you have more responsibilities"—is suggestive of the multiple, and often conflicting, relationships girls have with their families, here and elsewhere described as generating responsibility and comfort. This image, alongside her second image selection of a woman in a suit and the phrase "Come with Benefits," speaks to the difficulty girls face finding employment, particularly in the context of welfare reforms of the last decades. And it is notable, at a period of macroeconomic shift toward contingent workers and a renewed assault on public benefits, that she would pull the word "benefits" from a magazine and connect it with work. "Gifts," which asserts both generous being-in-relation toward children and has

a commercial connotation as well, is also an inspired choice. Maribel exhibits

considerable resourcefulness in coding and re-coding these messages, which take on

different meanings in different contexts.

Linking all these images and phrases is an acknowledgement of the dynamics

of power, and a gesture toward resisting them through the multivalent use of the word

"Empowerment." It is also, at the same time, a hallmark of the neoliberal discourse.

The word "Empowerment"—as the final, connecting concept linking all these images

and phrases—is a hallmark of of neoliberal discourse. As I drew out in the

Introduction and Chapter Five, it is intimately tied to the project of neoliberal welfare

reform, to the proliferation of the rhetoric of personal responsibility, and, behind that,

to a nefarious implication that the sexual practices and household structures of low-

income Black and Latina women are to blame for community chaos and social

disorder.[290] The fact that it appears in the STARS girls' mural—literally and

figuratively at the center of their self-conceptions—illustrates the extent to which

girls' assertions of subjectivity must wrestle with individualism, the "death of

commons," and longstanding tropes about race and femininity.   Again, though, what

presents as the most restrictive and limiting component of Jessie, Maribel, Nicole,

and Cherry's mural—the ideological freight of its central theme—also points the way

forward. These girls really do have power, in the form of critical capacities,

transformative abilities, and resilience. Maribel explained that she usually adds TVs

to her art as a signature, so "you know it's mine." These TVs reflect her sense of

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[290] See, again, Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy.* 16, and the images associated with New York City's Human Resource Administration teen pregnancy prevention campaign, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Figure 25: Close-up of "Empowerment"

being under surveillance, and are imperatives to her audience: "Don't watch me, watch TV." Here, however, she made a different decision. In the face of all that the mural contains—double-binds, nightmares, gendered violence, isolation, drug addiction, love, connection, beautiful relationships, gifts—Maribel transforms a discourse of control (signified by the possible presence of a TV) into one of liberation (signified by the presence of hearts and houses, or, finally, "home").

For all its technologies and discourses of surveillance and control, then, the contradictions and instabilities of neoliberalism might also profitably be seen as providing potential space for intervention. Peck and Tickell remind us that neoliberalism "exists in historically and geographically contingent forms;" Doreen Massey suggests that this contingency itself creates the space for change. "There are indeed pressures and constraints, often of immense power," she writes in this

chapter's epigraph, "but there are also agents who play along, or resist, or struggle

mightily. There is room for political intervention."[291] Play along, resist, struggle

mightily…court-involved girls of color do all these, sometimes simultaneously. As

Maribel illustrates in the vignette above, their most revolutionary tendency is this

drive to assert connection, against a larger cultural drive toward individualism—to

create "home."

    Girls long for community and for a space where they are visible in all their

complexity—where, I have argued, drawing on bell hooks, "the me of me" matters.[292]

It is here, I argue, that policy, programming, advocates, and girls have the most

opportunity to work collectively. When it worked, the creation of this space was

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[291] Massey, *World City*. 11.

[292] There are numerous grassroots organizations that have been steadfastly working to create just such spaces for decades, if not centuries. For as long as there have been systems of oppression in the U.S., there have been both endogenous and exogenous efforts to combat them. Often, as I have argued, these exogenous efforts—even inadvertently—become complicit in the naturalization and perpetuation of the system they putatively seek to reform. Many of the community-based efforts I obliquely refer to here grew out of gender-based anti-violence activism—specifically domestic violence and sexual assault—in the 1980s and 1990s. These women-of-color-led groups argued that many of the tactics pursued by domestic violence advocates aligning battering with law and order neoliberal reforms of the mid-1990s—largely overlooking the concerns and experiences of women of color—ultimately increased rather than decreased violence against and system involvement among women of color. These groups sought to offer alternatives to the systems that dominate the lives of many women of color. See Crenshaw, "From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally About Women, Race, and Social Control."; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, ed. *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology* (2006). hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Maraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. This critique was most famously leveled in Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." Examples of such groups include (though are certainly not limited to) the national organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, as well as New York-based groups like Sista II Sista : Hermana a Hermana; SisterFire-NYC; Sisters in Action for Power; Soko Underground Network; and Make the Road.

something girls articulated as a real, tangible strength of the STARS program. As Stephanie explained of her experience in the STARS program,

> I've been here almost four months. The girls, they've always been nice to me. We try to help each other out. It's good to hear about what other girls have gone through. We could relate to that. I made friends here. I can't say I get along with everybody, of course. But I would say I made friends. When they put us all together, we go through a lot of the same stuff here. So you feel comfortable talking to them, [stuff like] being nervous when we go back to court, stuff like that. We're all from the same neighborhoods, and we go through the same kind of problems in our neighborhoods, see the same kinds of things, and have similar problems with guys. Like, someone you know is always getting arrested, or somebody's in a fight, or somebody gets killed.

Stephanie valued having a space to talk to other girls, a space where they can be "all together" to create a collective out of otherwise isolating experiences of trauma and victimization. Maribel agreed that there was value to this, and said she preferred to have a girls-only group to discuss these things: "It's more comfortable among the girls." Helping build a home, both discursive and physical, for girls' connections to occur is a vital counterpoint to the violence of neoliberal social change, creating an alternative and "essential narrative, an ethical text that deprivatizes pain to border-cross into public activism," to return to Joy James' epigraph at the beginning of this. The deprivatization of girls' shared experiences is central to building community, and to the creation of spaces where girls can feel safer articulating the intersectional and *collective* nature of their experiences. In the face of the pervasive, multisource violence I have traced, this approach presents itself as central, not supplementary, to the project of keeping young women out of state control.

Appendix A

| Table 4: Core STARS Informants						
Map Number	Participant Name	Age During Research Period	Racial/Ethnic Self-Identification	Neighborhood Affiliation(s)	Dates of Individual Interviews*	Dates of Group Interviews*
1	*Anaya*	17	Puerto Rican	Lower East Side	N/A	2/11; 2/25; 3/4/; 3/11
2	*Cherry*	17	Mexican	Sheepshead Bay	N/A	2/11; 2/25; 3/4; 3/11; 3/25; 4/10; 4/17; 4/24
3	*Jessie*	18	Puerto Rican	Flushing (a) & South Bronx (b)	5/1; 5/8; 5/29; 6/5; 6/15; 7/10; 7/24	2/11; 2/25; 3/4; 3/25; 4/10; 4/17; 4/24
4	*Malika*	18	Black	Flatbush	7/2/2008; 7/9/2008	5/16/2008
5	*Maribel*	18	Puerto Rican	South Bronx	7/10; 7/24	2/11; 2/25; 3/4; 3/11; 3/25; 4/10; 4/17; 4/24
6	*Natalia*	17	Puerto Rican	Bensonhurst / Sunset Park	2/25; 3/4; 3/11; 3/25; 4/10; 4/17; 4/24	2/11; 4/17
7	*Nicole*	17	Dominican & Black	Bedford-Stuyvesant	N/A	2/11; 2/25; 3/4; 3/11
8	*Stephanie*	18	Black	Mt. Vernon (a) & Kingsbridge (b)	6/6/2008; 7/2/2008; 7/9/2008	5/16/2008
9	*Kiki*	17	Black	Harlem	N/A	5/16/2008

*All dates are 2009 unless otherwise specified. Girls with multiple neighborhood affiliations identified a neighborhood of current residence (a) that differed from their neighborhood of affiliation (b).

| Table 5: Additional Informants (through STARS Program Observation)				
Map Number	Participant Name	Age During Research Period	Racial/Ethnic Self-Identification	Neighborhood Affiliation(s)
10	*Michelle*	20	Black	East New York (a) & South Bronx (b)
11	*Alyssa*	15	Puerto Rican	South Bronx
12	*Amber*	17	Black	East New York

Appendix B

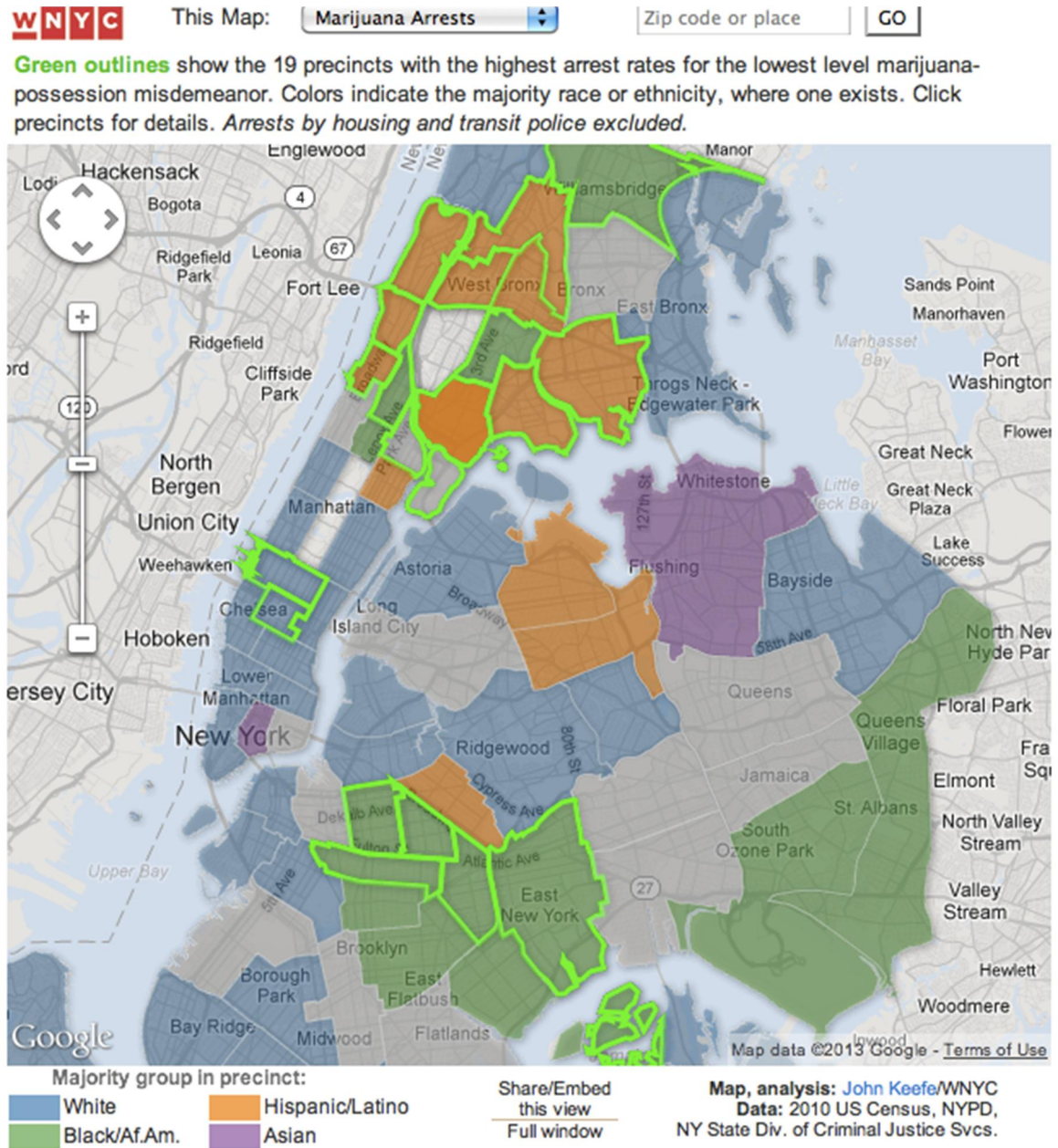*Figure 26*: Map of Girls' Neighborhoods
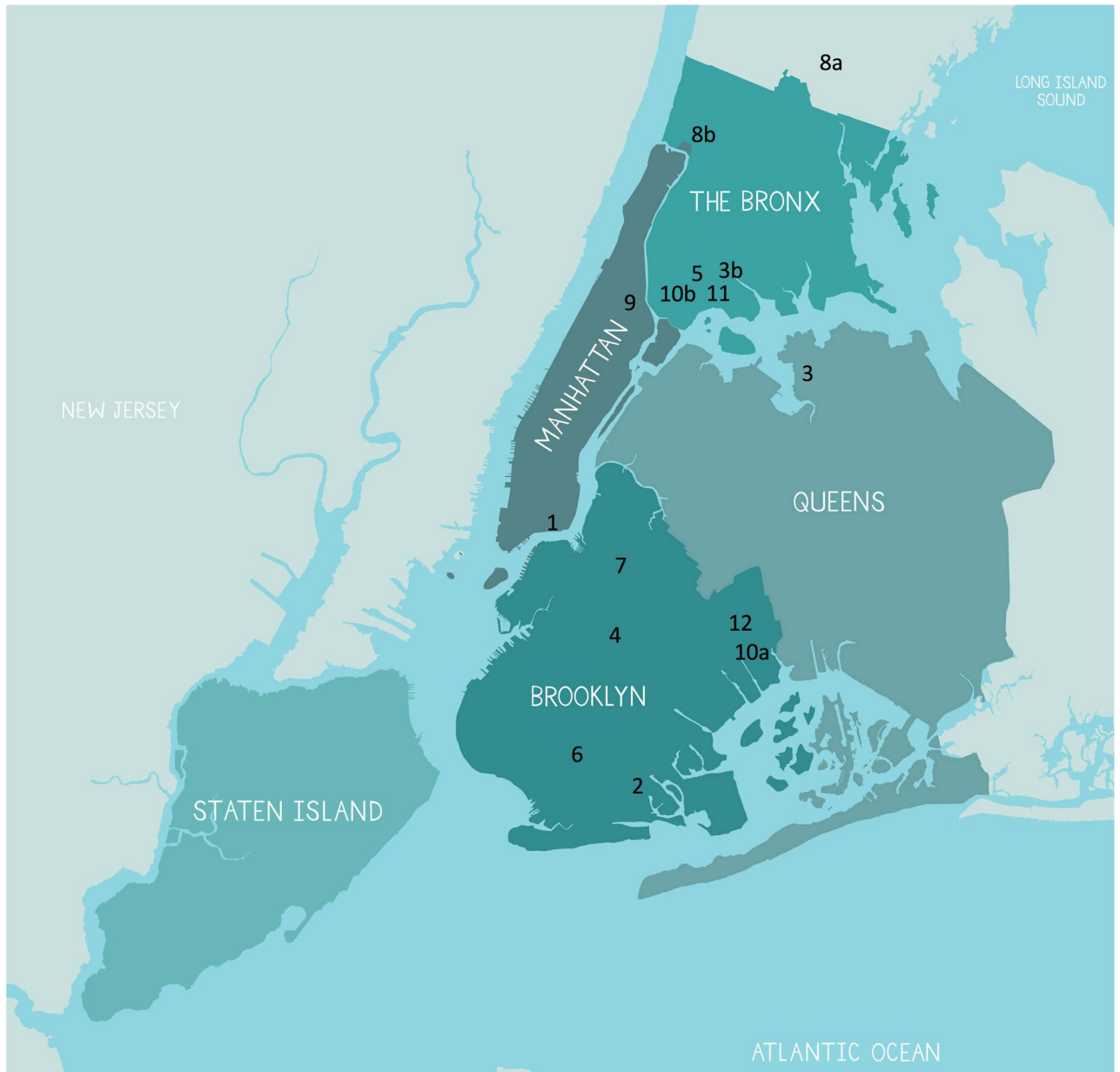
Appendix C

Figure 27: Map of New York City Neighborhoods with Greatest Prevalence of Stop-and-Frisk Incidents
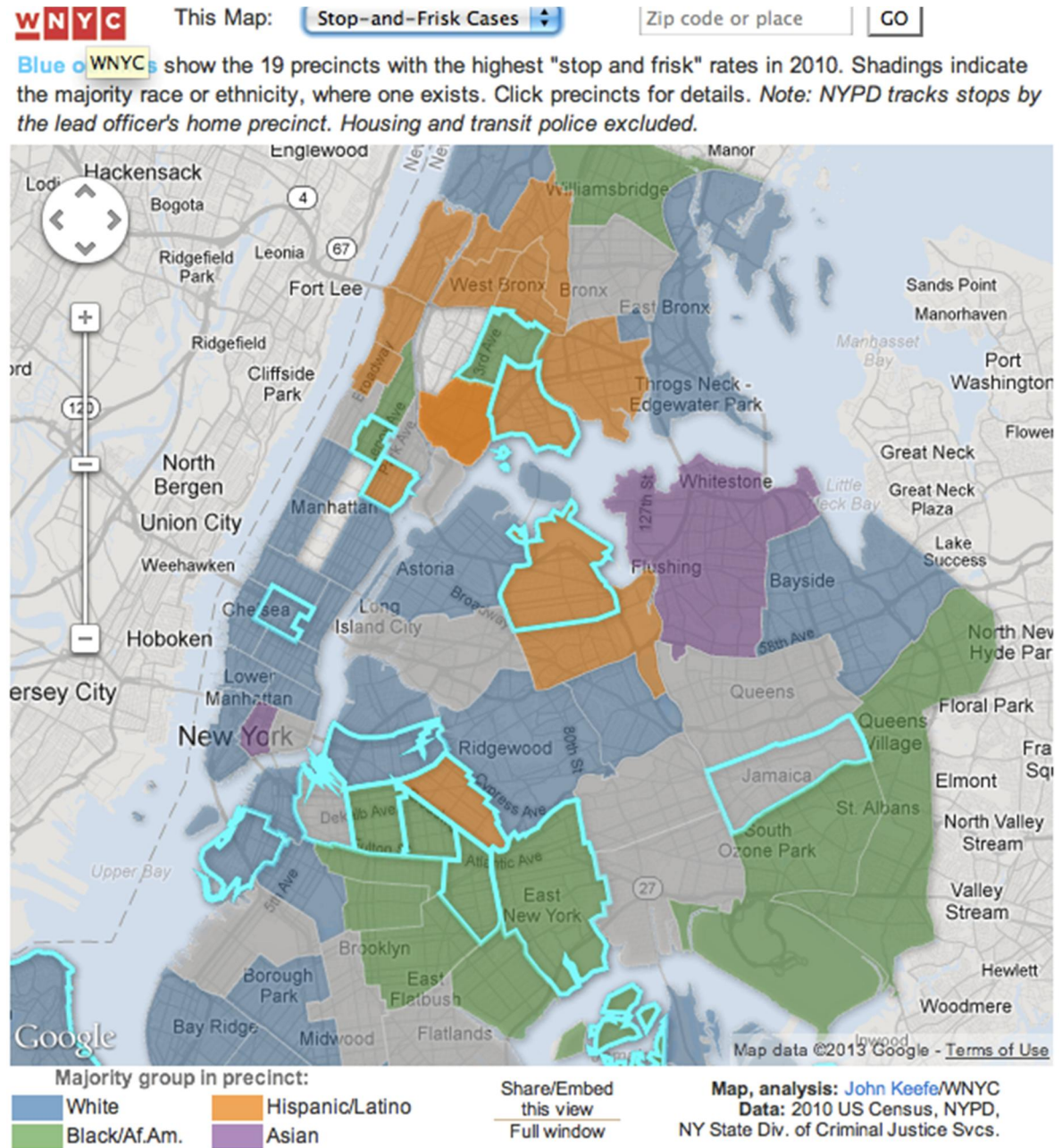
Appendix D

Figure 28: Map of New York City Neighborhoods with Greatest Prevalence of
Marijuana Arrests

Table 6: Beth E. Richie's Violence Matrix[293]			
	Physical Assault	**Sexual Assault**	**Emotional Manipulation**
Intimate Households	1. Direct physical assaults by intimate partners	2. Sexual assaults and aggression toward Black women by their intimate partners	3. Emotional manipulation of Black women and the creation of a hostile social environment by their intimate partners
Community	4. Direct physical assaults by community members	5. Rape, sexual harassment, and sexual aggression toward Black women from their community	6. Emotional manipulation of Black women and the creation of a hostile social environment in their communities
State	7. Direct physical assault of Black women by state agencies and public policy	8. Sexual exploitation and aggression toward Black women who are in state custody and by public policy	9. State authority and public policy that enables emotional manipulation and the creation of a social environment that is hostile to Black women

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[293] Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*. 133.

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