Locating the Subject:
Towards a Reading of Young Women, Identity and Postmodernity

Shelley Budgeon

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of doctorate of philosophy.

The University of Leeds
Department of Sociology and Social Policy

May 2000

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Carol Smart and Sasha Roseneil for the inspiration and guidance they provided to me throughout this project. Appreciation is extended to my family who, despite geographic challenges, were always there to give me their unwavering support and understanding. Thanks also to my support network in Vancouver for keeping a place for me to return to and to my amazing friends in Leeds, too numerous to list here, for giving me a place to be. To Anna, James, Thomas and Simon, much love and gratitude, for helping me learn the things I really needed to know.

Abstract

The aim of this research project is to examine theories of identity formation within the context of individualisation processes and the shift of social formations from modernity to postmodernity. The form and content of identity narratives being constructed by young women aged 16 to 21 are used as the empirical basis for addressing this research problem. Interviews were conducted with 33 young women and 5 practitioners across five different sites to explore what kinds of identities were under construction. The project is organised around the relationship between theory and the empirical such that data generated through interviews are utilised for the purposes of interrogating the ontological assumptions of theories of reflexive modernisation, particularly the work of Anthony Giddens. Working from within a poststructuralist framework a move is made beyond a deconstructive critique through to the development of alternate strategies for reading the identities under construction. It is this kind of integration between theory and the empirical that is central to sociological analysis and the furthering of theoretical projects. It is suggested that these young women were constructing a relation to the self where the self is defined as independent and autonomous. A Foucauldian approach is used to theorise this relation to the self and to critique the assumptions of reflexive modernisation. Emergent themes that are explored in relation to this construction of the self include technologies and narratives of the self; the organisation of identity and difference; embodiment and representational practices; intimacy and individualisation; and the emergence of 'micro politicised' identities.

For Grace, Joan, Pat and Myrna in recognition.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Locating the Subject

> Each of us not only 'has', but *lives* a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life. Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question, 'How shall I live?' has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity (Giddens, 1991:14).

> ...power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault, 1982:212).

Identity 'is constituted within a historical process of consciousness, a process in which one's history is interpreted or reconstructed by each of us within the horizon of meanings and knowledges available in the culture at given historical moments...' (de Lauretis in Alcoff, 1988:425). The historically specific social and material conditions that influence how identities are formed and maintained affect how we make sense of social relations and practices as well as how we then live out identities in relation to others (Woodward, 1997:12). Identity is about the relationship between the individual and society; agency and structure; the link between the self and the social; the bridge between private and public.

Locating particular forms of selfhood within the social and understanding the dynamics of this relationship has been an important aspect of analysing social conditions. This focus is evident in recent debates concerning the nature of contemporary society notably in the work by Beck (1992, 1995); Bauman (1996b); Castells (1997); Giddens (1991, 1992) and Rose (1998). Giddens argues that to understand modernity one must look further than its institutions to the level of the individual: 'Modernity must be understood on the institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with

individual life and therefore with the self' (1991:1). If an integral aspect of modernity is distinct forms of selfhood then debates regarding whether we have entered a postmodern condition, or conversely remain within modernity, inevitably lead to questions and contested answers about the nature of the self and the emerging conditions within which this self is located.

The purpose of the following discussion is to establish the historical and theoretical context of this study of the identity of young women within conditions of postmodernity. In order to do so the emergence of the concept of individualised identity will first be located as the outcome of historical processes that constitute a transformation from one epoch to another. This discussion will provide a background to current debates concerning the transformation of modernity into a distinctly different historical era a suggestion that must be addressed through an explicit statement of what might constitute a 'postmodern' condition[1]. One of the issues arising from debates about the nature and extent of historical transformations is the problem that the very term 'postmodern' presents. It is important to recognise that a distinction must be drawn between postmodernity as a set of social conditions constitutive of an historical era and postmodernism as a set of interpretations or ways of theorising those conditions[2]. With regards to this study the formation of identity will be located within a particular set of social conditions characterised as postmodern. One of the primary aims of the analysis undertaken here will be to interrogate ways of theorising identity in order to formulate a response to those conditions and to develop ways of theorising the relationship between those conditions and the identities under construction.

Therefore, following a discussion of the emergence of the individual within modernity, a broad outline will be given of the main features of postmodernity

[1]Debates concerning the very meaning of modernity, modernism, postmodernity, and postmodernism constitute a literature of considerable size and diversity. The difficulty of reaching consensus on what these terms refer to and their significance is made apparent within many discussions. For further consideration of how to theorise these terms please refer to Bauman (1996), Boyne and Rattansi (1990), Harvey (1989), Hassan (1985), Huyssen (1990), Jameson (1984), Kellner (1988), Kumar (1995), Seidman (1998), Smart (1992).

which, as a set of historical conditions, will be seen to provide the context within which young women are constructing their identities. It will be argued that theorists have developed different strategies, based on different ontological assumptions for theorising identity within these contemporary conditions. These two approaches - reflexive modernisation and poststructuralism will provide the tools with which to address questions of identity formation by young women in conditions of postmodernity.

Modernity and the Emergence of the Individual

The assertion that identity is inextricably linked to the social conditions within which it is produced is itself a modern notion. Indeed, the discourse of identity is distinctly modern, intrinsic to and partially constitutive of modernity itself just as the importance accorded to the individual and increasing individual autonomy are defining features of modernity (Calhoun, 1994:9). Modernity is often characterised as constituted by a transformation in which the individual, in contrast to the collective, becomes of increasing importance. This is because the recognition of and increased value placed upon the individual are an inherent outcome of processes of modernisation such that it is with the development of modern social conditions that the imperative to 'know oneself' arises. Individualisation, as a defining characteristic of late modernity, translates into an enhanced potential of individuals to be freed from external constraints and forces that limit the kinds of identities possible. Individualisation is part of the process of detraditionalisation for which Heelas provides the following working definition:

> Detraditionalisation involves a shift of authority: from 'without' to 'within'. It entails the decline of the pre-given or natural orders of things. Individual subjects are themselves called upon to exercise authority in the face of disorder and contingency which is thereby generated. 'Voice' is displaced from established sources, coming to rest with the individual (1996:2)

While modernisation has been characterised by an increasing significance accorded to the individual there are two historical moments when such processes

---

2 This distinction is explained effectively in Roseneil (1999).

are understood to have intensified, producing conditions within which this significance intensified. The first of these defining moments occurred during the upheaval caused by the radical transformation of traditional, feudal societies to modern industrial social forms. The second moment, characterised as similarly momentous in terms of social upheaval, is often perceived to be taking place in the late modern or postmodern[3] era establishing further the importance of individual identity.

In traditional societies the individual was embedded in a pre-given order in which external sources of authority controlled, to a large extent, the destiny of the individual who exercised only a limited autonomy. Traditions, by providing an ordering framework for existence, worked to satisfy existential and ontological questions. For example religion, kinship systems and the local community played a significant role in shaping the scope and direction of individual lives (Giddens, 1991). Via processes of modernisation, however, external sources of authority were demystified and began to dissolve. Privileges of rank and religions lost their force and ascriptive elements increasingly disappeared as sources of identity leaving the individual with more autonomy to confront an expanding range of options about how to live.

> The modern era brought an increase in the multiplicity of identity schemes so substantial that it amounted to a qualitative break, albeit one unevenly distributed in time and space. In the modern era, identity is always constructed and situated in a field and amid a flow of contending cultural discourses (Calhoun, 1994:12).

Although the notion of self-identity is made possible by the modernisation of tradition the processes which bring it into being also make it increasingly

---

3 The terms 'late' modern and 'postmodern' often refer to the same set of socio-historical conditions. This point is made in many of the discussions cited in note 1 above. For purposes of this study, the two terms will be used to indicate the same historical era i.e. post world war two but where specific theorists are discussed it is their usage that will be indicated. For example Giddens does not use the term postmodern but instead uses late modernity or reflexive modernity although his characterisation of this historical era shares many of the characteristics of a postmodern position. A definition of the defining features of this historical social condition will be provided below.

problematic to create and sustain. As Giddens states, in premodern societies 'tradition is a means of handling time and space, which inserts any particular activity or experience within the continuity of past, present and future, these in turn being structured by recurrent social practices' (quoted in Hall, 1992:278). In contrast modernity is rife with discontinuities, ruptures, and rapid change – all characteristics which enhance the development of reflexivity. Loss of external authority, the freeing up of life courses circumscribed by ascriptive categories, and a growing awareness by individuals of their own distinct sense of 'self' contribute to less stable identities which are constantly in a process of reconstruction.

While it is acknowledged that detraditionalising forces are at work within the unfolding of modernity the arguments put forward by Beck and Giddens are disputed with regard to the *extent* of detraditionalisation they propose (Thompson, 1996; Luke, 1996). A critique of this position maintains that modern societies undergo processes of differentiation and pluralisation, thereby becoming more fragmented, however, the extent to which tradition is disintegrated in the process is held up for debate. Rather than modernity being fundamentally about the eradication of tradition, the argument has been made that processes of detraditionalisation co-exist with processes which lead to the rejuvenation, reconstruction and maintenance of tradition within modern forms of life. The result is a social condition shaped by both tradition and individualisation. To fail to take both processes into account is to fail to accommodate the complex nature of late modernity. Therefore, it is argued that because tradition continues to operate, drawing a clear contrast between past and present, or tradition and modernity, is a misrepresentation of two social processes which occur simultaneously rather than as discrete social forms. For individuals this means that the authority of the self exercised autonomously in constructing a biography is always held in tension with external sources of authority which operate against that autonomy.

If, through detraditionalisation the individual is able to live a more autonomous existence and choose from a wider array of possibilities in seeking self-fulfilment, the individual also comes to experience an effect that contradicts

counteracts this freedom yet has its origins in the same source. 'Individuation'[4] makes reference to the tendency within modern society for increased surveillance and control of individual subjects[5]. Processes which result in more importance being accorded to the individual also make it 'meaningful to tell individuals apart, to identify them, to register them and ultimately to control them; the uniqueness of the individual is his or her subordination' (Abercrombie et. al., 1986:151). Thus tension is created by the suggestion that modernity makes available increased autonomy to an individual who is embedded in relations and institutions which seek to inscribe the subject in specific ways. Throughout this study this tension between the subject who freely chooses and the subject who is made knowable through particular modes of subjectification will provide one of the key themes of analysis[6].

Postmodernity, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

In theorising a transition from modernity to postmodernity, identity has been identified as a central topic of investigation because it is suggested that an emerging set of conditions now provides the context for the creation of new forms of identity. However, in order to engage with this suggestion the debate, and confusion, about what the terms postmodernity, postmodernism and poststructuralism refer to demands acknowledgement. *Postmodernity* within the context of this study will be used as a designation for a specific set of historical social conditions. *Postmodernism,* and in particular, *poststructuralism* refers to ways of theorising our relation to those conditions. This set of conditions reflects both continuity and discontinuity with the conditions that constituted modernity and as such

---

4 This idea is also expressed in Foucault's work on subjectification particularly in the concepts of disciplinary power, normalisation, and surveillance where the individual becomes an object of knowledge. These ideas are developed in his discussion of 'the panoptican'. See Foucault (1977). Also see discussion in Abercrombie et. al. (1986). The term 'individuation' is also used as a psychological concept, however, that is not how it is being referenced here.

5 This argument is not universally supported. For a counter argument see Maffesoli (1996) who argues that in late modernity group identification or 'tribes' increase in importance. This argument follows in the tradition of Durkheim

6 The central premises of reflexive modernisation, particularly Giddens' theorisation of the choosing subject, will be addressed in chapter two. An alternate approach will also be also

postmodernity cannot be seen as a radical departure from modernity[7]. This is a historical era rooted in modernity, where 'modern ideas, practices, and politics continue, to some extent, to exist alongside postmodern ones' (Roseneil, 1999:164). It is located at the historical moment when modernity becomes self conscious and begins to reflect upon itself. Postmodernity does not represent a new era as much as a new situation to the extent that we can now, for the first time, look back on modernity, and reflect upon it from a perspective that allows particular questions about modernity to be asked (Bauman, 1992:23-24, 187; Huyssen, 1990:267-268; Kumar, 1995:140-142)[8].

> It is precisely this possibility of being able to take stock of modernity, that is, to be able to reflect upon its central assumptions, practices, and accomplishments or consequences, which has been identified as symptomatic of a postmodern condition (Smart, 1997:398).

The main analytical and political assumptions of modernity - that knowledge is progressive, cumulative, holistic, universal, and rational, have been made deeply problematic by a postmodern radicalisation of the reflexive potential of modernity (Smart, 1997:397). The result has been the development of what will be referred to in this study as a postmodern perspective – a perspective that constitutes a relationship to social conditions of modernity where certain assumptions underlying modernity are questioned and consciously rendered problematic. The position taken here is that postmodern society is defined by several distinct characteristics and that questions of identity are embedded in this set of conditions. The ones relevant to this analysis of identities are:

- A fragmentation of the social order marked by increased fluidity and contingency whereby heterogeneity and multiplicity undermine the belief in a unified, single reality.
- The end of grand narratives, for example that progress can be achieved through the application of reason.

---

outlined a 'genealogy of subjectification' which is influenced by Foucault's work and developed by Rose (1996a, 1996b, 1998).

[7] This is a position shared by Bauman (1992), Giddens (1991), Beck et. al. (1994) and Roseneil (1999). The historical era of interest in this study is post World War Two.

[8] This position is shared by theorists of reflexive modernisation for whom expanded reflexivity is central to their theorisation of contemporary social conditions.

- A critique of the rational, self-constituting subject where the 'death of the subject[9]' means enacting a challenge to the ideology of the universal modern subject, where that subject has been male, white, and middle-class, in order to develop alternative notions of subjectivity.
- A shift from universals to questions of difference.
- A shift from the production of knowledge from an 'objective', universal position to that of the local and everyday.
- The increased importance of knowledge and culture where attention is given to language as constitutive and not merely reflective of the social order.
- Identities are not essential or unitary but constituted from multiple sources, taking multiple forms.

Theoretical Strategies - Reflexive Modernisation and Poststructuralism

Responses to theorising identity within this set of transformed conditions have followed two main strategies[10]: The first strategy, one aligned with social theory offers an 'historicized narrative of the development of identity, which is conceptualised as *self*-identity, the individual's conscious sense of self' (Roseneil and Seymour, 1999:3). The other strategy based within cultural theory focuses on 'the problematic of identity and cultural difference, and in the theoretical deconstruction of identity categories' (ibid.). The social theory position includes theorists of reflexive modernisation, particularly Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992)[11] who argue that identity becomes more important in late modernity because as the social order fragments identities can no longer be built within the parameters of ascribed categories.

Beck argues that 'just as modernisation dissolved the structure of feudal society in the nineteenth century and produced the industrial society, modernisation today is dissolving industrial society and another modernity is coming into being' (1992:10). The argument is made that the reflexivity that is a key characteristic of modernity produces a state in which the parameters of industrial society – gender roles, family and occupation, the belief in science and progress – begin to lose their

9 The demise of the modern subject is a concept influenced by Foucault, Derrida and Barthes. See discussion in Kumar (1995:129).
10 This idea is taken from Roseneil and Seymour (1999:2-5).

hold. This is because industrial society is based upon a fundamental contradiction between the universal principles of modernity – civil rights, equality, functional differentiation, methods of argumentation and scepticism – and the structure of institutions which allow these principles to be achieved in only a limited and partial way (Beck, 1992:14). The result is the destabilising of industrial society through its very establishment. Modernity, therefore, is being released from its industrial design and the individual is now, more than ever before, left to negotiate an ever widening expanse of choices. Identity is established and maintained through the ongoing development of a reflexively ordered self biography and the ability to keep a particular narrative going.

From a perspective influenced by cultural theory, most notably poststructuralism, theories of identity share with reflexive modernisation theory the premise that identities are not fixed but multiple and shifting. However there is a more explicit focus on the inherent instability of identity categories, the processual nature of identity formation and the heterogeneity of the self – assumptions which challenge the humanist conception of the unified and essential subject (Butler, 1990, 1992, 1993; Rose, 1998; Weedon, 1997). Poststructuralism launches an attack on the assumptions underlying the modernist subject - namely that the subject is the origin of meaning and the essential ground of knowledge[12]. Rather in poststructuralist theory the subject is conceived as a construct of linguistic practices (Kumar, 1995:131). Although many of the theorists labelled as poststructuralist differ in many ways one 'common theme is that the self-contained, authentic subject conceived by humanism to be discoverable below a veneer of cultural and ideological overlay is in reality a construct of that very humanist discourse' (Alcoff, 1988:415). An analysis of the operation of power is also explicit in this approach where 'truth' is seen as the product of the operation of power. As Butler and Scott (1992:xiv) argue, 'poststructuralism is not, strictly speaking, *a position*, but rather a critical interrogation of the exclusionary operations by which "positions" are

---

11 Although theorists who fall under this rubric differ in certain aspects their position is similar to the extent that it is appropriate to group them together in this way.

12 The main assumptions regarding the poststructuralist theorisation of the subject are explained in Barrett (1992:202-204).

established'. Attention is given to the cultural context of the production of the subject as opposed to the 'ontologically intact reflexivity' of the subject emphasised by theorists of reflexive modernisation (Butler, 1992:12). Poststructuralism is useful for theorising subjectivity within postmodernity because it shares an emphasis on pluralisation and fragmentation; the refusal of positing totalities; and an incredulity towards grand narratives (Kumar, 1995).

These two strategies for theorising identity rely upon different ontological assumptions. Understanding how they differ necessitates a consideration of the specific types of selfhood they focus upon. The modern intellectual history of selfhood revolves around three dimensions upon which the self is constructed: the material/bodily; the relational/social; and the reflexive/self-positing[13]. As Seigel (1999:285) points out 'how each is conceived, which one is emphasised, and what relations are posited between them are the central questions determining what a given view of the self will be like'. Proponents of reflexive modernisation tend to emphasise the self-positing self while postructuralists focus upon relational aspects of identity where meanings of subjectivity are organised discursively through operations of difference.

These issues provide the backdrop to questions that will be explored in this study. The aim is to examine in detail the tensions and contradictions inherent in theorising identity and to interrogate assumptions underlying theoretical explanations of how the relation of self and other is being constructed and lived in late post modern social conditions. This endeavour necessitates a critical engagement with those theorists who are located within the framework of reflexive modernisation– Beck and Giddens – and those who argue from a position defined by poststructuralist critiques (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1988; Grosz, 1994; Rose, 1998, Weedon, 1997). The ontological assumptions from which this research begins is that social reality is produced and reproduced by social actors. It is not an

13 These categories are not wholly discrete from each other but form sufficiently different aspects such that a distinction if helpful. As Seigel points out (1999:284) at different moments any one of these dimensions may provide nurture or limits for the others allowing for the self to expand or keeping it contained.

object that exists outside of discourses, representations, interpretations, social constructions and the practices which these organise. It is not singular in form but a multiplicity of realities where sets of meanings and relations provide the basis for processes through which the individual assembles a representation of the self in the form of identity.

> As we acquire language, we learn to give voice – meaning – to our experience and to understand it according to particular ways of thinking, particular discourses, which pre-date our entry into language. These ways of thinking constitute our consciousness and the positions with which we identify structure our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity (Weedon, 1997:32).

The representations which give meaning to who we are do not emerge from within the self constituting individual but through a continuous process, an ongoing renewal based in an interaction with the outside world – that is a subjective engagement with practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, affect) to the self and daily events (de Lauretis in Alcoff, 1988). These experiences produce the individual.

If the study of identities is not about the study of an *object* that exists independently of social interaction but about the charting of a constant *process* then identity cannot be known as a stationary or motionless object that exists as a complete and non-contradictory totality. As such how can it be known? What epistemological assumptions must be made explicit in order to claim that some theories are more adequate than others in assessing the ways individuals are creating their identities and the implications this might have for the structuring of social relations? One of the ways in which identities become manifest as an object for inquiry is through the stories that people tell about themselves and the narratives they construct about their lives. It is only through the accounts rendered that the nature and content of the self can be made apparent albeit as a temporary fixing of meaning. Interviews, through the exchange and interaction of interviewee and interviewer, produce stories based upon the meanings, interpretations and discourses available to both participants. The researcher is necessarily involved in

the production of the stories told and the identities that emerge within the site of inquiry[14].

> We cannot simultaneously claim (1) that the mind, self, and knowledge are socially constituted and that what we know depends upon our social practices and contexts and (2) that feminist theory can uncover the truth of the whole once and for all. Such an absolute truth...would require the existence of an Archimedes point outside the whole and our embeddedness in it (Flax, 1990: 48).

Analysis of the content and structure of the stories individuals assemble yields an understanding of the discourses, ideas, and meanings that organise the identity under construction. As such these narratives allow a point of entry into the space between subjectivity and the social the space of identity.

The Study: Young Women and Self Identity

This inquiry into theorising identity will proceed within the context of a study of young women, aged 16 to 21 years[15]. This group is of particular interest in relation to debates surrounding identity because since the mid 1970s a number of significant social transformations have impacted greatly on the life choices and trajectories young women have available to them. Transformations to the social have resulted in a set of conditions where more options and possibilities for defining the self exist than for any previous generation of women. Contributing factors to these historical transformations include post industrialisation, economic recession, the restructuring of the economy, revisions to state welfare provision, the expansion of post-compulsory education, and the impact of feminism and new

14 This positions reflects a poststructuralist deconstruction of the subject-object dichotomy as the knowing subject, usually placed outside the context of knowledge production, is brought back into the situation as an active participant, who in direct interaction with the known object, is implicated in the kinds of knowledges produced. In such an approach the distinction between the knower and the known is problematised.

15 The methods and strategies employed in this study are discussed in appendix one.

social movements[16]. McRobbie (1994) suggests that young women have been 'unhinged' from their traditional gender position and that the impact of feminism

> ...has made issues around sexual inequality part of the political agenda in both the private sphere of the home and in domestic relations, and in the more public world of work. Likewise, institutions themselves (particularly in education) have been alerted to the question of women and young women as economic agents, participating in the economy for the greater part of their lives. Altogether this kind of heightened activity around questions of gender has radically undermined what might be described as the old domestic settlement which tied women (and young women's futures) primarily to the family and to low-paid or part-time work. There is, as a result, a greater degree of uncertainty in society as a whole about what it is to be a women, and this filters down to how young women exist within this new *habitus* of gender relations (McRobbie, 1994:157).

One of the most important outcomes of these changes to the social order is that the route from school into the workplace, the traditional notion of 'transition' from youth to adulthood, has become destandardised and individualised. For example Furlong and Cartmel (1997:1) argue that over the last two decades the experiences of young people in industrialised society have altered dramatically with consequences for relationships with family and friends, experiences in education and the labour market, leisure pursuits and lifestyles options, and their ability to become established as independent adults. As a result young people today, regardless of social background or gender, must confront a set of choices which for the most part were unknown to their parents. The lessening influence of ascribed identities leads to a more individualised experience of the transition to adulthood and the routes to follow out of secondary schooling become less predictable. Opportunities have expanded, a greater degree of choice is possible and the materials from which to build an identity have multiplied.

---

16 One illustration of the fragmentation of routes comes from the realm of education where new types of qualifications have been introduced broadening the range of post compulsory educational choices available to young women. The GNVQ for instance may serve as either a direct route into the labour market or, in contrast can provide an alternative to A-levels and, subsequently, another route into higher education. For a more detailed discussion of the impact of transformations to the socio-historical context of young women's lives please see appendix two.

In this study key aspects of theorising identity, specifically approaches informed by reflexive modernisation and approaches informed by poststructuralism, were used as a basis for the construction of questions which were designed to yield a self narrative by the young women who participated in the interviews. The questions focused on several topics including educational plans, career goals, and intentions regarding marriage and child rearing – all of which contributed to the construction of a life narrative. Within these narratives it was also possible to discern attitudes towards the nature of choices and opportunities available as well as their limits; the relationship between self and body; and perceptions of social change and relations of inequality. An initial analysis of the data revealed a remarkable degree of uniformity in the narratives produced in terms of the form of the narrative, the attitudes expressed, and the ways in which decisions and choices were being negotiated. The similarity in the self that was being constructed can be characterised as a self that is free to choose; that is in control of one's destiny; and is individually responsible for the outcome of one's choices. This autonomous self formed the basis for further inquiry and analysis particularly with regards to questions about how to account for this specific kind of self; about what effects this construction has for the narratives young women can produce; about implications for how young women are able to live their lives; and how to theorise the relations which work to constitute the identities under construction. These concerns became central to the subsequent analysis. Therefore, the following chapters do not constitute a study of the lives of the young women interviewed in which the goal is to deliver a detailed account of their lives per se but rather to engage with the particular form of selfhood they were constructing within a specific site and within a specific context of making choices about their lives[17].

These narrative accounts will be analysed in a recursive fashion where a series of interrogations of theory are conducted via readings of the data in order to find gaps that leave processes of identity formation undertheorised and to locate the points in the data where excesses evade the confines of theory. Consideration will

[17] For ethnographic accounts of young women's lives see Griffin (1985); Hey (1997); Lees (1986; 1993); McRobbie (1991); and Sharpe (1976; 1994).

be given to theories of reflexive modernisation but with a critical interrogation of the underlying ontological assumptions which limit ways of theorising identity. The objective is to then move beyond a negative critique or a deconstruction of reflexive modernisation to engage in a positive project which seeks to develop alternative strategies for reading the narratives. This alternative is informed by a poststructuralist decentring of the subject but not via a whole scale adoption of poststructuralist principles which taken to their most extreme conclusion result in a relativism that is highly problematic for the social sciences. The goal here is to follow through a process of theorising identities by moving between theory and the empirical and back again in order to suggest ways of theorising that render the identities constructed in this study discernible. This process will also lend insight into the identities that young women are producing within a particular historical moment, as well as, indicate what some of the implications are for the type of self being constructed.

The strategy employed is decidedly 'postmodern' in its orientation to the generation of knowledge. This is difficult terrain to navigate because as Hekman (1991:96) states, 'The desire for an objective knowledge of the social world rooted in the knowing rational subject is the basis for the epistemology of the social sciences'. However, Lather (1991:xvi) argues that rather than characterise the fall of positivism as a 'crisis', 'such questioning of basic assumptions might be seen as an effort to break out of the limitations of increasingly inadequate category systems and toward theory capable of grasping the complexities of people and cultures they create – theories outside of binary logics of certainty, non-contradictions, totality and linearity'. The uncertainty of making knowledge claims in a postmodern climate poses a major challenge to feminist theorising. Richardson (1994:518) describes the core of postmodernism as,

> The doubt that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the 'right' or the privileged form or authoritative knowledge...But postmodernism does not automatically reject conventional methods of knowing and telling as false or archaic. Rather, it opens those standard methods to inquiry and introduces new methods, which are also, then, subject to critique.

The problems surrounding epistemology currently confronting feminists are complicated by the emergence of divergent positions within feminist theory. As feminist theory has developed and evolved, it has become increasingly problematic to assume a unitary feminist position. In its development, the nature of feminist theorising has become increasingly more complex, and differentiated furthering the challenges of grounding feminist claims to knowledge. This is especially evident in the debates that have occurred around the relationship of postmodernism to feminism. The tensions within this debate are far from being resolved, however, as Lather (1990) argues above, these debates produce the conditions for generating an understanding of the complexities of the social world[18].

Interrogations

Questions of difference, the embeddedness of subjects in systems of knowledge and meaning, the heterogeneity of practices that constitute the local and the everyday, and the fluidity of the social world will appear as recurring themes throughout the series of interrogations undertaken here. These conditions necessitate a questioning of the possibilities for the formation of identities and ways in which these identities can be interpreted theoretically. The contention that within late modernity the individual is increasingly freed from the constraints of ascribed identities organised through relations of class, race, and gender is addressed in the following chapters. Of particular interest is the suggestion that the individual must construct their own internally referential identity within conditions of pluralisation and choice.

---

18 Disagreement and debate on what constitutes a postmodern feminism, or whether such a thing can even exist, remains a productive debate and does not preclude the use of postmodernist/poststructuralist concepts. See debates in Nicholson (1990) and Barrett and Phillips (1992). The assumptions in use here will contrast to principles of modern epistemology. The first point of departure is in the assertion of a post humanist subject versus the Cartesian subject of liberal humanism. This exploration of the relationship between the empirical and the theoretical will seek to avoid universalising assumptions, singular models or meanings, relations of direct causation, teleology, fixity, binary logic and claims to representation of an independent reality. Instead these assumptions will be assessed as limits in order to arrive at alternatives that are posed not as some ultimate reality but as partial truths or interpretations emerging at the local level of meaning production.

In chapter two the assumptions of reflexive modernisation will be explored primarily through a detailed explication of the work of Anthony Giddens and his interpretation of how identity is a process of constructing a reflexively ordered biography within conditions that demand the navigation of pluralising life choices. This perspective, having attracted much attention, and become the object of debate, will be critiqued - especially his emphasis on a reflexive, autonomous, self constituting subject. A modified view, one more clearly influenced by poststructuralism will then be examined providing the basis for understanding the subject as embedded in local practices, relations and institutions that constitute a 'regime of subjectification' which produces a particular relation to the self.

In chapter three this alternative strategy for understanding narratives of the self will be pursued. An approach informed by the concept of technologies of the self is used to analyse the narratives of the self under construction. The choices that the young women in this study were confronting and which provided the basis for a construction of a narrative of the self are discussed. Utilising a Foucauldian influenced framework it is suggested that the content of these narratives and their function must be situated within specific sites, relations, institutions, knowledges, and practices that enjoin, inscribe and incite a certain relation to the self - that is the autonomous self. In this argument the notion of how choices about identities are constructed and the idea of 'choosing a self' are discussed. It will be argued that one's choices about who one wants to be are influenced by the specific type of self that is under construction – in this instance the autonomous self who is free to choose and makes choices in such a way that this particular relation to the self is preserved.

The relationship between the body and identity is examined in chapter four by addressing processes through which the body acquires meaning. The ways in which these young women talked about their feelings towards embodiment and the pressures they experienced regarding their own bodies are examined. It is argued that theories of reflexive modernisation in their emphasis on choice and reflexivity

construct a mind/body dualism where the body is reduced to a surface awaiting the inscription of meaning. However, this assumption reduces the body to an effect of representation and limits an understanding of how the body and self are lived processes. In response to this position it will be argued that the body is not an *object* but an *event* whereby the meaning of the self/body relation emerges through its immersion in local practices which effect the connections it makes in acts of becoming. This suggestion has implications for understanding women's bodily practices, their agency, and their resistance. These arguments are set within the context of their importance for feminist critiques of representation.

In chapter five the undertheorisation by reflexive modernisation of the organisation of identity through relations of difference is addressed by examining how young women and those practitioners that work with them engage with the suggestion that choices and opportunities for young women are limited. The positioning of the self and the positioning of the Other within social relations of ethnicity, gender and social class are analysed as interpretative devices which people use to explain one's access to choices. It will be argued that difference, as a concept that incorporates a range of dimensions, can be utilised in theorising how identifications are made across multiple positionings and how the self/other relation is organised within a context where identities are always multiple and never reducible to one axis. It will be argued that to understand how the subject navigates their sameness, as well as, their difference to others experiences which produce the individual must be taken into account.

In chapters six and seven, the focus of analysis will shift towards a discussion of the implications of the kinds of identities being produced by young women where they have a greater degree of flexibility in defining how they want to live their lives. In chapter six the incorporation of intimacy into individualised narratives is analysed looking at the models of intimate relations being constructed by young women. It will be suggested that these models, to varying degrees, incorporate aspects of the elements that Giddens argues constitute a transformation of intimacy. These models function as strategies for negotiating what the young

women perceived as a major challenge - the conflict between connection and autonomy. These strategies will be interpreted as an expression of the right to difference - a right to make individual choices which preserves respect for different ways of living one's life.

In chapter seven this theme of a right to make individual choices and the implications of an individualised self are discussed within the context of the project of feminism. An evaluation of 'postfeminism' is made in view of the ways in which both individualism and feminism inform the kinds of narratives constructed by the young women. It is argued that an emergence of 'micro politicised' identities is apparent and that this constitutes a resistant practice emerging out of the overlap of modern and postmodern political orientations. This analysis highlights the importance of recognising processes which occur at the level of the everyday.

Throughout the following chapters many of the themes addressed will reappear namely that the self under construction is one that is characterised by autonomy. Theoretical engagement with this construction, as well, as the implications of this particular construction for the lives of young women will be examined. Before proceeding to the core analysis, however, the setting of the study, the rationale for the questions asked, and a description of the interview sites are detailed in appendix one. This discussion provides the context from where the question of what it means to be a young woman in postmodernity can proceed.

Chapter Two: Giddens' Modernity

Throughout a significant number of theoretical works produced over many years Anthony Giddens has sought to identify, analyse and elucidate the distinctive characteristics which together are constitutive of the condition of modernity. In so doing he has been particularly interested in the 'crucial contradictions of modern existence: the enabling and constraining impact of social embeddedness, dialectics of power and freedom, trust and risk, autonomy and dependence in identity formation' (Bauman, 1993:363). Recently he has turned his attention to issues of modern identity and how it is that a distinct form of identity is associated with late modern social conditions. While reaction to this body of theory is mixed it is generally acknowledged that the issues he addresses are of central importance to contemporary social theory. Indeed theorising identity has become a principal problem within social theory - a problem whose significance has been increasing particularly as a key element in debates about whether or not a postmodern condition describes the contemporary social world. This chapter will explore the key components of Giddens' theorisation of modernity in order to establish a critique of his ontological assumptions. Many of the points made in this critique will provide the basis for a further interrogation of theories of reflexive modernisation via a reading of the empirical data which were gathered through interviews with young women. Following an explanation of the shortcomings of Giddens' theory an alternate approach to self identity is developed at the end of the chapter. Rather than accept the self constituting subject of Giddens' modernity it is proposed that a 'genealogy of subjectification', in which the subject is decentred from the origin of meaning, constitutes a more adequate framework for theorising the identities of young women in postmodernity.

Giddens takes as his starting point in this debate an 'interpretation of the current era which challenges the usual views of the emergence of post-modernity' (Giddens, 1990:149). Central to the challenge he presents to those who advance theories of postmodernity is the concept of 'radicalised' or 'reflexive' modernity. This current stage of modernity into which, he asserts, we are now entering is distinct from the previous stage of modernity because it is the result of an

intensification of processes immanent in modernity. He argues that it does not constitute a radical break with modernity but a further stage brought into being by its own logic because it is the consequences of modernity itself that are becoming more and more radicalised and universalised.

At the core of modernity is this principle of reflexivity which in the Weberian tradition locates the growth of rationalisation and rationality in the orientation of actors as a key to understanding modern social forms. For Giddens reflexivity is a key structuring property of modernity that accounts for its dynamic character. Reflexivity is also the key to the notion of duality central to Giddens' theoretical ontology. In his theory of structuration the social world is produced and reproduced through the actions and interactions of skilled and knowledgeable actors. Structural properties of social systems, therefore, are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise. Modernity is constituted by reflexivity at both the individual and institutional level. At the individual level reflexivity refers to the monitoring of activity in everyday life which is central to processes of structuration but on a more significant level reflexivity also accounts for the dynamic processes by which knowledge about social life is used in ways that work to organise or transform social life.

> The reflexivity of modernity has to be distinguished from the reflexive monitoring of action intrinsic to all human activity. Modernity's reflexivity refers to the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge. Such information or knowledge is not incidental to modern institutions but constitutive of them (Giddens 1991:20).

This formulation of the relationship between actors and social structures overcomes the problems of posing these two elements as a dualism whereby one term assumes dominance. Structures, therefore, do not exist externally to the actions, knowledge and routines which constitute them. They are a 'virtual order' because 'social systems, as reproduced social practices, 'do not have "structures" but rather exhibit "structural properties" and that structure exists, as time-space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents' (Giddens, 1984:17).

While reflexivity is characteristic of all human activity Giddens' theory of modernity rests upon the assertion that modernity is distinct from pre-modern society in that the quantity and quality of reflexivity in modern societies is unique. Modernity becomes a thoroughly reflexive social order which is inherently transformational because change is built into its social systems. It is a social order in a constant process of renewal and reproduction in which the potential for change is immanent to any and every interaction (O'Brien, 1999:23). The state of constant flux characteristic of modernity is often interpreted as a desire for novelty but to Giddens what is characteristic of modernity is not 'embracing of the new for its own sake, but the presumption of wholesale reflexivity' (Giddens, 1990:39).

In the modern world accepted habits, norms and conduct are continuously subject to revision in light of new information, knowledge or resources generating a mutable order (O'Brien, 1999:25). This contrasts with traditional societies in which reflexivity is in operation but within more rigid parameters. For example, social reproduction in traditional societies is circumscribed by 'place'. Existence is bound to the local both in terms of spatial territory and in terms of access to distant events or persons. Institutions, therefore, are grounded in local customs and habits. Within these settings tradition operates as a structuring principle because it is a means of integrating present experience with the past. Reflexivity in this process is largely limited to the reinterpretation and clarification of tradition so that the 'past' retains a significant influence on the present and future (Giddens, 1990:37). Authority in the form of tradition operates as a framework of external rule and there is minimal reflexive examination or questioning of established rules of conduct, beliefs, practices or institutions.

The key premise of Giddens' theory is that as society is transformed from traditional to modern forms and then, again, into late modern forms, social conditions necessitate a greater degree of reflexivity not possible in traditional contexts. The dynamic nature of modernity resides in three main elements: the separation of time and space, disembedding mechanisms and institutional reflexivity. All of these interact to both radicalise and globalise the traits of modernity thereby transforming the content and nature of daily life. In traditional society time was bound to space as both were experienced within the context of

place - the location of day to day life. Experience for the majority of the population, therefore, was always within a space of time linked to a specific place. Modern social organisation, however, is characterised by a separation of time and space, or an 'emptying' through the development of mechanisms for marking time such as calendars and clocks which removed time from place. This emptying coincided with the advent of modernity as well as the separation of space from place. Modernity,

> increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant form any given situation of face-to-face interaction...place becomes increasingly phantasmagoric: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them (Giddens, 1990:18-19).

The significance of these separations is that the local context is increasingly structured not only by that which is present but by that which is not visible. These separations also allow for the co-ordination of social organisation across time and space as social activity is no longer constrained by the framework of local habits and practices.

Disembedding mechanisms are integrally linked to the emptying of time and space. These processes make reference to the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time and space (Giddens, 1990:21). Two types of such mechanism are symbolic tokens and expert systems. An example of the former is money and of the latter, systems of professional expertise i.e. law, medicine. Both types of abstract systems function to bracket time and space. For instance money operates as a media of exchange with a standard value across multiple contexts. Expert systems bracket time and space by assembling various forms of technical knowledge which has validity regardless of the individuals who make use of them (Giddens, 1991:18). In short, disembedding mechanisms remove social relations from the immediacies of local context and necessarily imply an attitude of trust.

The third element identified by Giddens relates to reflexivity at the institutional level.

> Modernity is essentially a post-traditional order. The transformation of time and space, coupled with the disembedding mechanisms, propel social life away from the hold of pre-established precepts or practices. This is the context of the thoroughgoing reflexivity which is the third major influence on the dynamism of modern institutions...*the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge* (Giddens, 1991:20, emphasis added).

Although new information and knowledge provides the basis for the reconstitution and renewal of social institutions, the employment of reason, in this configuration, does not guarantee certainty. Indeed, detraditionalisation proceeds by knowledge constantly being held up for scrutiny and being made open to revision. Therefore, doubt alongside trust becomes a feature of modernity. In this regard post-traditional societies are characterised by a lack of external authority vested in a uniformly accepted set of core values and norms which are able to provide direction for individual decisions, actions and conduct. Traditional sources of authority, in the form of values or standards, passed down to further generations, become questioned via reflexive engagement (Bagguley, 1999:68-69). Social systems become internally referential – autonomous systems determined by their own constitutive effects.

A vital consequence of all these processes is that "for the first time in human history, 'self' and 'society' are interrelated in a global milieu" (Giddens, 1991:32). Traditions, which once clearly staked out the parameters of identity, lose hold and the individual's immediate context becomes one defined by an expanding array of social contexts or 'lifeworlds'. Daily life becomes a combination of the local and the global where experience is increasingly mediated such that events, regardless of their location, have an immediacy within local contexts. Giddens' stresses the point that reflexive awareness which is characteristic of all human action in late modernity becomes constitutive of the self. The reflexivity inherent in the constitution of modern institutions extends fully to the individual so that the self becomes a 'reflexive project' which must continually be remade in light of information about the many possible ways of life made available. Engaging with a self reflexive biography is governed by the moral imperative of authenticity for it is

up to the individual to gain self knowledge to ensure that one is 'being true' to oneself and it is one's obligation to pursue this self actualisation.

The self is reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his own biography and the awareness of this biography having a coherence and continuity across time and space (Giddens, 1991:53). So although a multitude of choices and opportunities for self definition may be available the individual achieves coherence through the capacity to keep certain narratives consistent. The project of the self involves the continuous integration of events occurring in the external world into this ongoing story of the self (1991:54). Through continuous self-observation a coherent and rewarding identity is constructed and reconstructed in light of both past events and an anticipation of the future. This 'trajectory of the self' assumes a narrative form - a form of interpretative self history. Whereas in pre-modern society the life span was governed by preordained or institutionalised 'rites of passage' which the individual passively encountered, in late modernity, the life course loses this external structuring. The development of self is no longer tied to external constraint but is increasingly internally referential as the points of reference to which the narrative of the self is oriented in order to establish coherence are set within that narrative according to how the individual constructs her life history. For instance many life transitions are now initiated by the individual whom they affect rather than being standardised points of reference along the life course. While individuals are freer to construct a biography of the self it must be done within conditions of increased risk and uncertainty so that self-actualisation becomes a balance of opportunities against risk.

> Negotiating a significant transition in life, leaving home, getting a new job, facing up to unemployment, forming a new relationship, moving between different areas or routines, confronting illness, beginning therapy – all mean running consciously entertained risks in order to grasp the new opportunities which personal crises open up...such transitions are drawn into, and surmounted by means of, the reflexively mobilised trajectory of self-actualisation (Giddens, 1991:79).

Central to the construction of the self in late modernity is the notion of choice. For Giddens choice is a fundamental element of day to day life. He states, 'modernity confronts the individual with a complex diversity of choices and,

because it is non-foundational, at the same time offers little help as to which options should be selected' (1991:80). As a consequence one's daily routines and practices become oriented to questions such as 'who am I', or 'who do I want to be'? From among the options available an 'integrated and routinised' set of practices are chosen as an expression of ones' self narrative. Such clusters constitute a particular 'life style' which are then subject to further revision in light of new experiences or information. Lifestyles are composed of choices made in the areas of styles of dress, diets, modes of conduct, social settings, types of people one socialises with and so on. Lifestyles connect and integrate these elements so that the choices made exhibit some unity and consistency in regards to one's reflexively organised biography. Part of adopting a particular lifestyle involves projections of oneself into the future and this planning for the future is just as integral as reflecting on the past in constructing a self narrative. Notions of 'choice' will be of central interest in this study and provide the starting point for a questioning of the suggestion that the self, in postmodernity, can be chosen, as well as, an interrogation of what the very notion of 'choice' means.

The Body, Pure Relationships, and Life Politics

The implications for increasingly reflexive identities are drawn out by Giddens in relation to a number of issues. He argues specifically that the 'wholesale' reflexivity of modernity extends to the body, intimate relationships and the realm of politics, producing specific effects unique to conditions of late modernity.

The Body

According to Giddens, in conditions of late modernity the body becomes less and less a 'given' functioning outside of internally referential systems and is increasingly subject to reflexive processes. On a basic level the self is embodied in the sense that throughout daily activity and interaction the individual must be aware of the movements and appearance of the body. Routinised control of the body in this regard is a crucial aspect of agency. Within late modernity, however, reflexivity goes beyond the basic awareness and monitoring that is necessary for

individuals to operate as competent social actors for the body is more than a passive object. It is, Giddens argues, 'an action-system, a mode of praxis, and its practical immersion in the interactions of day-to-day life is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity' (Giddens, 1991:99).

Four aspects in particular bear significance for the relationship between self and the body: appearance, demeanour, sensuality and regimes. Appearance refers to the outer surface of the body which is visible to the self and others. Demeanour concerns the ways in which appearance is used within daily settings. Sensuality refers to 'dispositional handling of pleasure and pain'. Regimes are the practices to which the body is made subject. As the individual encounters a plurality of different social settings and engages in a wide variety of social relations both appearance and demeanour have to be adjusted. This does not, however, result in fragmentation and the loss of an inner core of self but through reflexive monitoring the individual is able to maintain the coherence of self-identity. Bodily practices and routines are carried out in ways which are consistent with the biographical narrative of the actor. In this way the self and the body are integrated and lived as a unity. It will be argued in chapter four that Giddens' formulation of the self and the body implicitly retains a separation of the subject and object or mind/body relation and a privileging of the mind over the body in such a way that prevents an understanding of the mutually constituting and irreducible nature of the relation.

As the body in late modernity becomes immersed in the ever increasing reflexive organisation of social life, like other aspects of life, the body also becomes subject to the notion of 'choice'. Like the self, the body becomes a project constructed and cultivated reflexively in view of options made available through a multitude of lifestyle options. These options are made manifest in areas such as clothing styles, self help health guides, diets and exercise regimes through which the individual can assume responsibility for the design of his or her body. It is less and less something that the individual accepts as given and more a part of the self which is can be created in accordance with the narrative of the self. In this regard 'body planning' is part of the internally referential system of the self. These assumptions will be problematised in chapter four by asking where the meaning of the body comes from and what it means to 'choose' a body. In Giddens'

formulation it is seemingly chosen but it will be argued that the body and the self are embedded in local practices and relations whereby the body its meaning and its relation to the self emerge as an event.

Intimacy and the 'Pure Relationship'

Giddens argues that there is a 'direct (although dialectical) connection between the globalising tendencies of modernity' and what he terms 'the transformation of intimacy' within daily life (1990:114). Personal life is not separate from the social and indeed the two realms are situated in a recursive relationship so that transformations in the nature of one area impact upon the other. Intimacy, in late modernity also becomes subject to reflexive processes and the dynamics of the internally referential project of the self. Specifically these conditions give rise to the 'pure relationship'.

The pure relationship is 'a social relation which is internally referential, that is, depends fundamentally on satisfactions or rewards generic to that relation itself' (Giddens, 1991:244). The basis for intimate relationships within this context becomes that which it can deliver to each of the parties involved. Proximity and external criteria become less influential in the development and sustenance of close interpersonal ties. Kinship, social duty, and traditional obligations dissolve as anchors for interrelationships and intimate ties instead become subject to voluntary selection. Because this form of relationship is no longer tied to external references it must be reflexively organised, made and remade against a backdrop of continuous social changes and transformations. Reflexive engagement and interrogation is oriented specifically to what the relationship is delivering or, for that matter, not delivering. This involves both a reflection on the self (what do I want?) and on the relationship (what is this relationship about?).

Within this reflexive form there is constant balance between autonomy and the kind of self disclosure which is necessary to building and sustaining trust. Trust cannot be taken for granted and like other aspects of the pure relationship it has to be worked at for at its very core the pure relationship is chosen and entered into voluntarily which ultimately means it can be exited on the very same grounds. Self

reflexivity is integral to building trust as being 'true' to oneself depends upon such activity and it is only this implied authenticity that can provide the basis for mutual trust. Therefore the discovery of self undertaken by each partner, shared through processes of mutual self disclosure, form the basis for the ongoing cultivation of trust.

This transformation of intimacy in Giddens' formulation would seem to make intimacy increasingly difficult to find let alone foster and sustain but he argues that the loss of external influences and a recognition of the tensions inherent in relationships based on choice by individuals is offset by commitment. This notion is linked to choice as to commit to someone or to a relationship implies that it is an option. Commitment means that despite the problems inherent in modern relationships the individual is willing to take a chance, 'to work at it' but only insofar as the relationship remains rewarding according to internal references. Reflexivity therefore creates an inherent tension through the ordering of self biographies and the pure relationships into which the self may enter. For Giddens 'self identity is negotiated through the linked processes of self-exploration and the development of intimacy with others where individuals commit to creating and sustaining a meaningful connection, a 'quality of relationship'' (1991:97). However, as in other aspects of his analysis he suggests that pure relationships, while providing opportunities, also imply risks.

In further consideration of the ways in which intimate relationships have been transformed by the expansion of reflexivity Giddens addresses the issues of love and sexuality. In particular he ties the 'sexual revolution' of the past thirty or forty years to a revolution in female sexual autonomy and to the flourishing of homosexuality (1992:28). Freed from prior constraints 'decentred' sexuality becomes 'plastic'. The development of new reproductive technologies and birth control techniques sever the connection between reproduction and sex allowing sex to become truly autonomous – wholly a quality of individuals and their interactions. In this regard it also becomes part of the project of the self.

A related notion is that of 'confluent love' developing not completely in opposition to romantic love but definitely in tension with it. The ideals of romantic

love such as 'forever' and 'one-and-only' fragment under the pressure of female sexual emancipation such that love becomes more active and contingent in nature. This form of love presumes equality in emotional give and take. Love, like intimacy, develops only in so far as each partner is willing to engage in self disclosure thus making oneself vulnerable. The significance of this reciprocity for Giddens is that to a certain extent romantic love does not require this of men. Confluent love, however, is rooted in the assumption of gender equality. Confluent love develops as an ideal in a society where almost everyone has the chance to become sexually accomplished; and it presumes the disappearance of the schism between 'respectable' women and those who in some way lie outside the pale of orthodox social life. Unlike romantic love, confluent love is not necessarily monogamous, in the sense of sexual exclusiveness but is held together through the acceptance on the part of each partner, 'until further notice', that each gains sufficient benefit from the relation to make its continuance worthwhile (Giddens, 1992:63).

In his analysis of intimate relationships Giddens draws out the implication that 'the possibility of intimacy means the promise of democracy' as confluent love and the pure relationship are based upon autonomy. The principles that have transformed the personal realm, autonomy being one of these, are consistent with the realisation of democratic principles in the wider social context. Giddens argues that autonomy 'means the successful realisation of the reflexive project of the self – the condition of relating to others in an egalitarian way' (1992:189). The establishment of these sorts of relations in the private sphere can translate into a transformation of relations within the public sphere where the creation of a democratic order depends upon the recognition that others are not a threat. The incorporation of intimate relationships into the narratives of young women will be explored in detail in chapter six where the issues of equality, authenticity, autonomy and choice are discussed in relation to the strategies that young women employed in constructing models of intimacy.

Life Politics

In Giddens' view the processes which underlie the dynamics of modernity

ultimately point toward the possibility of a distinctly reformed social order. Throughout his treatment of self-identity in late modernity Giddens argues that the expansion of institutional reflexivity, the disembedding of social relations by abstract systems, and the consequent interpenetration of the local and the global underlie crucial transitions in the modern social order. It is these transitions which contribute to a new form of political engagement concerned with human self actualisation at both the individual and collective level by forcing acknowledgement of existential issues which the institutions of modernity have excluded. The contours of late modern 'life politics' are best discerned against the contrast provided by the nature of politics associated with modernity.

Emancipatory politics are defined by Giddens as 'a generic outlook concerned above all with liberating individuals and groups from constraints which adversely affect their life chances' (Giddens, 1991:210). The principles central to this outlook are the same ones which have been fundamental to the development of modern institutions, primarily the ideal of freeing individuals and social life from the constraints of tradition through the subjection of the social and natural to human control. The orientation to freedom and liberty expressed in emancipatory politics involves casting off the constraints of the past to allow the creation of a better future and, more specifically, the aim of overcoming the domination of some individuals or groups by others (Giddens, 1991:211). Power is conceived as hierarchical expressed through its exertion of one individual or group over others. As such the main concerns of emancipatory politics have been to reduce or abolish exploitation, inequality and oppression. This vision is guided by the imperatives of justice, equality, and participation and the mobilising principle of autonomy which privileges the right of the individual to exercise freedom and independent action. Giddens does not suggest that this form of politics ceases in late modernity but co-exists alongside life politics.

Life politics 'concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualisation in post-traditional contexts, where globalising influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realisation influence global strategies' (Giddens, 1991:214). The emergence of such a form of politics presumes that a certain level of emancipation from the

constraints of tradition and conditions of hierarchical domination has been achieved. Within this context political concerns begin to be refocused around issues of lifestyle choices and self actualisation. The emphasis shifts from power as hierarchical to the generative and transformative capacity of power. Political issues arise from reflexively ordered biographies as people search for answers to questions such as 'how should we live?'. Life politics therefore are explicitly oriented towards the future anticipating 'the development of forms of social order on 'the other side' of modernity' (Giddens, 1991:214). Emancipatory politics are derived from the belief characteristic of modernity that humans can seize control of the natural and the social in order to improve the quality of life for all humans. In contrast, life politics begins to question the effects that those very efforts have produced. This is clearly illustrated by the environmental movement.

The reflexive project of the self requires individuals to constantly shape and re-arrange self identity within the context of social conditions which shift and change at both the local and global levels. The goal becomes finding ways to create morally justifiable ways of life that will promote self-actualisation within a global context of interdependence (Giddens, 1991:215). The types of concerns that are addressed by life politics are very much at the individual level but because of the globalising processes of modernity decisions made at this level have consequences on a much greater scale.

Giddens suggests that feminism is a form of life politics that also has elements of emancipatory politics at its core. These elements concern the challenges made to traditions which governed women's roles and the struggle to overcome the illegitimate domination of men over women. These concerns have to a large degree translated into social transformations but Giddens argues that other concerns begin to emerge once a certain level of emancipation has occurred and these concerns relate much more closely to the concerns of the reflexive subject because "the more we reflexively 'make ourselves' as persons, the more the very category of what a 'person' or 'human being' is comes to the fore" (Giddens, 1991:217). For feminism this issue is manifest in the very questioning of what constitutes a gendered identity within conditions that allow so much choice. It also extends to the body which is no longer taken to be a fixed physiological entity but

open to choice and modification. Feminism also fits Giddens' definition of life politics because of its potential transformative impact on the future. He suggests that the more women gain equality and influence traditionally male dominated domains the more those domains are significantly reorganised and reshaped.

In chapter seven these themes will be taken up in a discussion of how the identities being constructed by the young women in this study are characterised by a form of politicised agency at the local level of everyday life. The practising of these identities will be assessed as a intermingling of both forms of politics proposed by Giddens. Elements of both of these forms of politics will be discussed within the larger context of the tension between postfeminism and second wave feminism.

Critical Engagement With Giddens

Giddens' rendering of the social world in late modernity has been the subject of much scrutiny and while his work continues to provoke debate there clearly are areas which prove problematic. His commitment to the modernist ideal of rationality in particular leads to a series of shortcomings that warrant attention. The problematic nature of Giddens' ontological assumptions of the subject will form a major focus of this study because it results in a series of limitations in understanding how identity is formed within specific, local and historical contexts. In the following critique these issues are reviewed providing a point of departure for the further examination of some of these problems in relation to the identities that were constructed by the young women interviewed.

In a highly critical treatment of Giddens' work, Mestrovic argues that Giddens' message is distinctly modernist and, therefore, implicitly inadequate for theorising the condition of the contemporary social order. This is apparent in his tendency to develop a single theory to encompass all other attempts at social theory and in his dependence on the 'rational Enlightenment-based trajectory of cognition and rationality as the unifying element' (1998:31). Indeed Giddens' reliance on reflexivity and the purposes he has for the notion present a series of problems. At the very core of his theory of structuration is the idea that 'the human agent is

skilled and knowledgeable and uses structure in an enabling fashion' (Mestrovic, 1998:32). The appropriation and recursive use of knowledge and information applies to both individuals and institutions. For Giddens reflexivity, therefore, is a structuring principle of modernity which accounts for its dynamic character, its constant movement and its displacement of tradition. In the transition from traditional to modern society, and the transformation from modernity to late modernity, individualisation provides the motor for social change (Lash, 1994:112). It is also the basis for his normative agenda because it provides the rational basis for freedom, providing an orientation towards personal and social development (Penna et. al., 1999:8). One consequence of relying on the notion of reflexivity to such a significant extent is an over reliance on the rational, instrumental, individualistic agent.

Self-identity for Giddens relies upon the active production of self by the individual in which the self becomes the object of reflexivity (Bagguley, 1999:70). The self is 'routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Giddens, 1991:52). Self-identity, therefore, is the continuity produced by the reflexive ordering of one's biography. Despite the growth in choices and pluralisation of life worlds made available to the individual in late modernity, coherent and unified selves are achieved through reflexivity. Giddens' social agent is not dissimilar to the self-authoring, calculating, goal-oriented subject of the liberal tradition associated with western thought throughout modernity. The subject is 'unambiguously sovereign in conception and exercises powerful interpretative skills as an author of conditions, qualities and events' (May and Copper, 1995:78). The intentionality which is implicit in his theorisation of the subject omits moments where unintentional events or actions produce a more significant effect with the implication being that self-identity emerges out of a much more haphazard process. Bagguley takes up this argument in relation to transformations of self identity occurring within the context of social movements where it is more likely that transformations follow an unintentional path rather than as the product of the individual's realised intentions (1999:82). The privileging of rational intent limits an understanding of the dynamics of social processes that are due in some part to irrational or unexpected phenomenon, as well as, the impact of external processes.

This point, taken up by Mouzelis (1999), leads to a questioning of Giddens' formulation of reflexivity, and more specifically to thinking about reflexivity in terms that do not rely upon a construction of the agent as essentially rational and goal oriented. The starting point for Giddens is the distinction between the reflexivity characteristic of traditional contexts and that which operates in late modern contexts. In traditional contexts reflexivity is limited by the fact that tradition to a large extent defines the parameters of an individual's social existence. Within late modern contexts, Giddens states that reflexivity is significantly less constrained by extrinsic factors, therefore, requiring the individual to negotiate the options on offer. The qualitative difference between these two modes of reflexivity has been challenged by some of Giddens' critics, however, Mouzelis makes the important point that attention would be better placed in examining the qualitative distinctions that can be drawn between different forms of reflexivity which coexist *within* modernity. The formulation of reflexivity offered by Giddens is a one sided treatment of a complex process. What remains to be considered is whether there might be other ways of reflexively reacting to the conditions created by detraditionalisation - one that is not so thoroughly activistic (Mouzelis, 1999, 85).

> Following the Protestant-ethic tradition, the reflexive individuals' relation to their inner and outer worlds is conceptualised in ultra-activistic, instrumental terms: subjects are portrayed as constantly involved in means-ends situations, constantly trying reflexively and rationally to choose their broad goals as well as the means of their realisation (Mouzelis, 1999: 85).

It is likely that setting goals and devising means of achieving them are governed by reflexive processes organised along less rational and instrumental lines. Thrift, drawing on de Certeau's account of everyday life, argues for that a 'make-it up-as-you-go-along' world of pliable, opaque, and stubborn spaces undermines the known and determinate appearance of daily, routinised life (Thrift, 1993:114). For Giddens, though the only other alternative to reflexive conduct is the pathological engagement in compulsive behaviours. This begs the possibility of a 'reflexive attitude that does not seek (via rational choices) actively to construct life orientations, but rather allows in an indirect, passive manner life orientations and other broad goals to emerge' (ibid.). This analysis opens up the possibility that individuals make their way through the post traditional field of choices in front of

them in a more arbitrary manner than Giddens allows for.

Exploring this issue further Mouzelis endeavours to show that individual goals and life plans can be emergent in nature and not necessarily the product of rational construction. He makes this point by exploring how non-secular mystical traditions have emphasised the impossibility of relating to the divine via rational or cognitive methods. In these traditions reason can only be useful for developing awareness of the inner obstacles that impede the soul from opening up to divine grace. This form of reflexivity has its secular parallel in forms of psychoanalysis and therapies in which the goal is the development of awareness of defence mechanisms that prevent non-pathological patterns to emerge. In this form of reflexivity 'life-goals 'appear' or 'emerge' rather than having to be actively constructed' (Mouzelis, 1999:87).

Giddens' means-ends reflexivity may, therefore, be incompatible with many areas of social life in which individuals develop identity. To some degree it is incompatible with Giddens' own approach to the 'pure relationship'. He maintains that pure relationships depend upon a form of intimacy freed from external obligations, grounded instead in ongoing dialogue, mutual disclosure and trust but reflexivity, in Giddens' usage, involves a instrumental relationship to the self in which the self is an objectified project[1]. In contrast the pure relationship, Mouzelis argues, is based upon an inter-human relation in which the self and other are treated non-instrumentally.

> The pure relationship depends upon mutual trust between partners, which in turn is closely related to the achievement of intimacy...Such trust presumes the opening out of the individual to the other, because knowledge that the other is committed, and harbours no basic antagonisms towards oneself, is the only framework for trust when external supports are largely absent (Giddens, 1991:96).

Indeed, if pure relationships are entered into by individuals who actively

[1] By this Mouzelis means that the self becomes to the subject an object of strategies. This is apparent for example in attempts undertaken to maximise self actualisation via self help manuals or therapy where these ideas are applied to the self as an object of knowledge. It is a relation, therefore, governed by instrumentality. Operating from this position of instrumentality would prevent open, mutual disclosure and trust (1999:92).

construct reflexive biographies in the way argued by Giddens, then it is more likely that the pure relationships they enter into are based on 'mutual distrust and the mutual manipulation of each Other's weaknesses and insecurities' (Mouzelis, 1999:92). In summary, all these arguments support the value of recognising the limits of Giddens' use of reflexivity and the need to consider ways in which reflexivity may best be understood as a less unitary and instrumental relation to the self.[2]. This theme will recur throughout the analysis in relation to how subjects come to understand the self and the choices available in constructing a self within conditions of embeddedness that is within multiple, contradictory local practices and relations.

The limits of Giddens instrumental reflexivity also becomes apparent when considering the relationship between the self and group identifications. It is within these settings shaped by collective processes and sentiments that identities often find expression. Giddens' ideal type, however, is a singular subject. Hetherington locates this ideal type within the Weberian tradition of the autonomous, bourgeois, male subject who occupies a privileged position that presumes objectivity. Despite postmodern approaches to the subject that undermine these assumptions, Giddens retains a commitment to theoretical humanism. This commitment leads to an underestimation of the affective dimension of identity that finds expression in gatherings based on shared emotion.

> ...revolutionary action, solidarity and comradeship, the symbolism of revolt, and so on all call upon the feelings of people and seek to ground a sense of moral right and wrong in that realm of feeling and expression rather than in reason alone. To have an identity is to find ways of expressing oneself through identifying with others, and that identification is based in the expressive world of feeling and emotion and forms of collective sentiment (Hetherington, 1998:51).

Giddens follows the dominant trend in sociology of overlooking the emotional experience of modernity in favour of privileging rationality which means that this approach fails to adequately analyse the basis of collective movements

[2] The notion of reflexivity as formulated by Giddens or Mouzelis, as well as, the different forms of pure relationships discussed in their work are ideal types. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that these types more likely occur in combinations.

characteristic of late modernity and their implications for identity[3] (Hetherington, 1998; Maffesoli, 1996; Bagguley, 1999). While Giddens ventures into the implications of increased reflexivity for the political realm, the form of 'life politics' he offers up is still to a large extent designed according to highly individualised terms whereas Hetherington, among others, points out that deindividualising processes arise alongside detraditionalisation and are just as significant in their effects as individualising ones. As identifications based on ascriptive categories like class break down, new sorts of social groupings emerge and provide the basis for identifications and lifestyles. Detraditionalisation might dilute and dissolve communal ties but elective communities arise in the space provided. At the same time as the individual becomes the central social actor there is a return of the 'repressed we' (Lash, 1994:111). This is true in the sense of the emergence of social movements but also in regards to ethnic cleansing, neo-Nazi movements and surges of nationalist sentiment.

Furthermore, reflexivity as formulated by Giddens, fundamentally undermines his own theory of structuration. If, as he argues, structures are a 'virtual' system made up of rules and resources instantiated as agents draw upon and use them then structures are not external to the agent - something 'out there' confronted by the subject but are both the means and the outcomes of interaction. This understanding is at the core of his subversion of the problem of agency-structure dualism. However, this notion of duality versus dualism is difficult to retain once the subject is said to reflect upon the plurality of life worlds and choices as this implies a distancing between the subject (knowledgeable agent) and the object (external social conditions). Reflexivity depends upon awareness and once reached the subject is able to observe, analyse, manage and make choices but this awareness is contingent upon a *dualism* of subject and object. It seems more likely therefore that only under conditions of routine would the subject/agent and object/structure duality remain in place because in these mundane, taken for granted conditions the carrying through of actions involve less reflexive engagement. As soon as the subject engages reflexively, the dual relation between agent and

[3] Furthermore this construction ignores the relational aspects of reflexivity. For a useful discussion of an alternative to the privileging of this individualised, unitary, rational self see Mason (2000).

structure comes into being. Therefore Giddens notion of a reflexively constructed self creates a contradiction within this overall theoretical project (Bagguley, 1999; Mouzelis, 1999).

Questions about human agency follow from the critique of Giddens' reflexive project of the self. In a world which is increasingly complex and fragmented due to the very processes that Giddens claims bring about late modern social conditions his confidence in the free, knowledgeable and skilled agent seems somewhat exaggerated. Mestrovic (1998:34) proposes that due to the massive proliferation of information to which individuals are subject creates a complex world in which most people function on 'auto pilot' most of the time because they simply cannot engage knowledgeably with these conditions. A similar challenge is made to the inherent knowledgeability and skill of Giddens' social agent by considering the many agents who do not fall into this category: children, mentally ill persons, and the mentally disabled for example all fall outside of his 'emancipatory vision' (ibid., 23). Clearly for many people the suggestion of reflexively engaging with and thereby transforming one's social conditions implies the operation of freedom and therefore power.

One area where this critique has relevant application is Giddens' notion of the pure relationship in which each partner invests in the relationship as long as it serves their individual interest. Partners can hold such an attitude because individuals in late modernity enjoy a level of autonomy made possible by the separation of sex from reproduction. But, as Bauman effectively points out if sex has been freed from reproduction 'it is also true that so far reproduction has not been separated from sex and pair relationships in general' (1993:366). Therefore, there is another of category of persons, 'third persons' who have a stake in the preservation of the relationship but not the autonomy that Giddens emphasises[4]. These people are affected but without choice as they lack the resources they would need to shield themselves against the impact of the outcome of the pure relationship. Such an example is only one which brings forth the complex nature of 'freedom' that Giddens overlooks.

[4] For a useful development of a critique of this in relation to the changing dynamics of

> As with all freedom, this one deepens the dependence of those acted upon and mortgages the future of the actors. As with all freedom, X's choice is Y's fate. In this game as in others, the most consequential decisions are made by those with the biggest hand, not by those with the biggest stakes (Bauman, 1993:367).

Giddens' failure to deal adequately with issues of power, domination and social inequality leaves a consequential gap in his theorising. If late modernity is about 'openness', the pluralisation of lifeworlds, the diversity of authorities, and the expansion of life style choices as the basis for the constitution of self-identity is this a uniform phenomenon? Disembedding of social relations, the increase of mediated experience, the pluralisation of life worlds, and the contingency of knowledge might create conditions in which individuals have wider parameters within which to create self identities but he seems to conflate the possibility of doing so with the actuality. Acknowledgement is made that 'class divisions and other fundamental lines of inequality, such as those connected with gender or ethnicity, can be partly defined in terms of differential access to forms of self-actualisation and empowerment' but he argues it would be a major error to suppose that this phenomenon is restricted to those in more privileged material circumstances (1991:6). It is the existence of widely divergent material circumstances characteristic of late modernity that he has been criticised for glossing over. Critics maintain that material conditions and access to economic resources underpin to a large extent any construction of self identity or the realisation of a 'life project'. It seems that his analysis is operating primarily outside of the material realm. May and Cooper suggest that

> The activity and sovereignty attributed to these subjects – unhindered as they are by the absence of structural and infrastructural resources – might lead us to suppose that what Giddens is outlining here is a theory of self-maximisation for the middle classes, or 'free floating' individuals (1995:82).

External constraints are part of the every day life that Giddens is concerned with. His undertheorisation of this concern may be due in some part to his explicit interest in arguing that human beings are active agents who never passively accept

---

family life refer to Smart and Neale (1999).

external conditions and that social systems do not form an uncontrollable context for social action. Indeed his central notion of institutional reflexivity depends upon the social actors incorporating new knowledge into environments of action that are thereby reconstituted or reorganised (Giddens, 1991:243). Movement within structuration theory is categorically recursive. In contrast Foucault (1988) and Rose (1996a, 1996b, 1998) offer analyses of aspects of modernity that lead to new forms of subjectification. For instance a key characteristic of modernity that advances in late modernity as a result of new technologies is the implementation of individualised systems of surveillance and knowledges. There are points of similarity between the notion of the discursive constitution of the subject and Giddens' notion that structures are rules and resources that enable and constrain social actors but Giddens rejects these arguments because he sees them as flowing in one direction only with the individual stripped of agency. Giddens' commitment to arguing for the recursive relationship between individuals and their environment is a useful way of subverting structural determinism but at times he may privilege self constituted agency at the expense of examining social conditions that continue to produce social divisions. In chapters two, three and four the subject will be located within particular practices and sites – positions from which a relation to the self is formed thereby problematising Giddens' 'free floating' social agent. A framework for understanding how individuals develop a particular relation to the self is outlined at the end of this chapter.

Part of the problem of using Giddens' theory of self identity for understanding social divisions returns to his theory of the subject. A subject which is unitary is difficult to locate within the multiple, intersecting dimensions that constitute relations of power and domination. Anthias in her critique of Giddens starts with the argument that,

> ...it could be argued that the self in high modernity is constituted in the different existential or ontological places of class location, sexual difference and collective or ethnic belongingness at the global as well as national levels. These do not take any necessary social forms but are intertwined in complex new ways that produce contradictory social locations, arising from the differential positionings of persons within the hierarchical orders of each existential location. The self is thus constructed in terms of multiplicity and contexuality rather than as a unitary process (1999:157).

When Giddens theorises the 'self' of late modernity he constructs a *collective* agent and proceeds to explain processes of identity formation as though these are universal. Differentiation fragments modernity producing, in Giddens estimation more choices and options but he fails to come to terms with the other implications of differentiation - namely that it is characterised by and reproduces hierarchies and inequalities within social relations. In this regard, identities are about the outcomes of differential positioning across a range of locales. A recognition of the importance of difference and divisions in understanding the dynamic of modernity has increased particularly under the influence of postmodern analyses in which the social world is said to be fundamentally about difference. To understand the implications of difference for identities and social relations it is necessary to move beyond thinking through these issues within the confines of binaries such as structure/agency, modernity/tradition, and subject/object (Anthias, 1999:159). Such binaries restrict understanding because the multiplicity and contradictions that are at play cannot be adequately captured in mutually exclusive categories.

While postmodernism in many ways has influenced a celebration of difference it is crucial to remember that difference is not politically neutral. Evaluation and assigning value are intrinsic to the processes of classifying thereby producing categories which then form the basis of social stratification. Anthias points out 'once individuals are placed into categories...across different dimensions, the relational terms of otherness and sameness are constructed. In the process notions of self and other, identity, identification and division come into play' (1999:163). Thus social divisions are at the 'very heart of the social order and of culture. They are central in terms of the constructions of identity and otherness and in terms of producing differentiated and complex social outcomes for individuals and groups' (Anthias, 1999:162). The set of issues raised by social inequality and hierarchically arranged social relations is taken up in chapter five where the notion of 'difference' and its various relations to identity are explored.

These arguments become particularly salient in relation to Giddens' conception of life politics. This new form of politics assumes that a certain level of emancipation has been won via versions of 'old style' political movements

concerned with overcoming divisions produced by oppression, inequality and exploitation. The focus then shifts towards a politics based on self actualisation via lifestyle choices. Giddens seems to imply this shift is universal failing to take into account that emancipation is often a question of degree and uneven distribution. For instance he treats feminism as a unified movement concerned with a universal female subject bringing about the same effect for all women. More sensitivity of the distinction between the situation of the educated middle class and their fellow citizens and between the affluent West and the rest of the global society is required (Smith, 1992:765). The issue of identity politics and the kinds of resistances being practised by the young women interviewed in this study are explored in chapter seven. It will be suggested that in western, industrialised nations young women have available to them a form of micropolitics derived from both emancipatory and life politics that in many respects makes these two forms of political engagement inseparable.

This combination of a reflexive, self authoring subject; social conditions marked by an easing of external constraints on the individual; an undertheorisation of power relations; and the favouring of universalism over difference and social divisions make Giddens' theorisation of late modern a highly optimistic account. The expansion of disembedding processes leads to a condition of empowerment, that is, the 'power of human beings to alter the material world and transform the conditions of their own actions' thereby providing 'generic opportunities not available in prior historical eras' (Giddens, 1991:139). Modernity for Giddens is driven by processes which allow individuals to exercise more control over their lives. Giddens' confidence in social transformation is evident when he proposes that the democratising effects of intimacy will transform the public sphere. May and Cooper (1995:81) argue that this is one of many examples of how Giddens relies upon an exaggerated model of human agency and 'neglects the ways in which collective, rather than individual action is the primary source of political change'.

Finally, Giddens does not grant enough significance to the chaos and irrationality that is at play within modernity. He attempts to construct a social theory on solely cognitive grounds which leaves out people's histories, habits, customs, feelings, and other aspects of non-agency all of which are essential to

understanding social processes and human behaviour (Mestrovic, 1998:25). Some commentators suggest that his optimism rings unrealistic in the face of continued inequality and divisions both at the local and global level.

> Giddens and many other mainstream sociologists have been singing a merry tune of global democratisation even as genocide raged in Bosnia, Russians expressed a nostalgia for Communism, the European Community began unravelling almost as soon as it was formed, and 'ethnic cleansing' became a metaphor for our times (Mestrovic, 1998:5).

The critique developed here will continue to unfold as these debates will be pursued in detail through a reading of the interviews with the young women in this study. The narratives produced by these young women will provide a lens through which to interrogate ways of theorising identity in postmodernity. Theories of reflexive modernisation are central to this exercise but before proceeding the assumptions underlying another approach will be examined. This approach constituted as a 'genealogy of the subject' provides a useful counterpoint to reflexive modernisation and will serve as a site from which to engage with Giddens.

Technologies of the Self vs. Biographies

Rather than accept that individuals are the reflexive, goal oriented agents of late modernity that Giddens suggests could it be that this construction of the subject as autonomous, sovereign, and freely chosen is instead a regulative illusion? Rather, that this way of understanding the self represents a *particular* way of thinking about the self – a 'certain way of understanding and relating to ourselves and others, to the making of human beings intelligible and practicable under a certain description' (Rose, 1998:2).

> We have been freed from the arbitrary prescriptions of religious and political authorities, thus allowing a range of different answers to the questions of how we should live. But we have been bound into relationships with new authorities, which are more profoundly subjectifying because they appear to emanate from our individual desires to fulfil ourselves in our everyday lives, to craft our personalities, to discover who we really are. Through these transformations we have 'invented ourselves' with all the ambiguous costs and benefits that this invention has entailed (Rose, 1998: 17).

From this perspective individualised responses to a detraditionalised world are the specific product of a historically contingent regime of the self which has produced modern notions of what it means to be a human being. In this conceptualisation the notion of the freely choosing, autonomous individual is actually a mode of subjectification which provides a way of governing the self because it is a way of relating to and understanding the self. It is a way of recognising oneself as a particular type of person – the subject of free will. What Rose challenges is the suggestion that a singular form of subjectivity inhabits a singular cultural configuration but that a heterogeneity of forms of personhood are assumed in different practices and that there are diverse possibilities for codes of conduct that orient any one human being in different fields of thought and action (Rose, 1996a:303). If this is taken as the starting point for theorising identity then questions arise as to why particular forms of identity emerge in specific locales at particular moments.

> ...our present ways of understanding ourselves are not the culmination of a unified narrative of real time – a singular linear chronicity which, despite advances and lags, moves from fixity to uncertainty, from habit to reflexivity across all domains of existence and experience. We must imagine time in ways that are more multiple than are dreamt in the temporalities of tradition and detraditionalisation (Rose, 1996a:303-304).

Rose (1998) proposes a 'genealogy of subjectification' as a means of accounting for the heterogeneous processes and practices by which individuals in modern western societies comprehend the person as 'a natural locus of beliefs and desires, with inherent capacities, as the self-evident origin of actions and decisions, as a stable phenomenon exhibiting consistency across different contexts and times' (1998:22). This genealogy is concerned with the relations that human beings have established with themselves – relations in which they come to understand and see themselves as selves. Subjectivity has its owns history and a genealogy of subjectification aims to focus directly upon the practices within which (in both historical and contemporary contexts) human beings have been made subjects. Such a project would 'address itself to those heterogeneous authorities that have, at different times and places, problematised human conduct and developed more or less rationalised programmes and techniques for its shaping and re-shaping' and study 'the connections between the truths by which human beings are rendered

thinkable the values attached to images, vocabularies, explanations, and so forth – and the techniques, instruments and apparatuses which presuppose human beings to be certain sorts of creatures, and act upon them in that light' (Rose, 1996a:296).

This project relies upon a fundamentally different starting point from analyses such as Giddens because it does not conceptualise changing forms of identity as the consequences of wider social and cultural transformations. Shifts in the ways in which human beings relate to themselves cannot be derived from transformations to other cultural or social forms because this argument presupposes the continuity of human beings as the subjects of history, essentially equipped with the capacity for endowing meaning. But the ways in which humans give meaning to experience has its own history. Techniques of constructing meaning produce experience because they provide the meanings and discourses which are available to the individual to employ in constructing the self and the social world (Dean 1994, Joyce 1994 in Rose, 1998:25). It is possible to write a history of ideas about the self or the cultural meanings attached to personhood or identity but it is problematic to assume that such a history can reveal how the 'mundane everyday practices that try to shape the conduct of human beings in particular sites' are organised and enacted (Rose, 1996a:298). Hence the need to examine the specific practices, techniques, knowledges and programmes that seek to govern human beings 'through inciting them to reflect upon their conduct in a certain manner' across a multiplicity of heterogeneous sites. Here Rose is advocating that our relation to our selves is not a question of ideas but of technologies which shape and guide our ways of 'being human'. The notion of the detraditionalised self is rejected by Rose because it does not engage with the ways in which different localised practices presuppose, represent and act upon human beings as if they were certain sorts of subjects. For example, he considers that the contemporary problematics of risk have not emerged out of novel existential features of the current moment but as a novel way of reflecting upon that experience (Rose, 1996a:320).

An account of the self defined by autonomy, rationality and authenticity demonstrates a relation to the self which Rose argues is constituted through a variety of 'rationalised schemes' which seek to influence the form self

understanding takes and the enactment of this particular understanding in the name of certain objectives. Such objectives include manliness, femininity, honour, modesty, propriety, civility, discipline, distinction, efficiency, harmony, fulfilment, virtue, and pleasure (1998:24). The ways in which individuals come to understand themselves as certain types of subjects are inscribed in the practices which act upon the 'conduct of conduct'. These practices are organised within specific locations such as the school, the family, the prison, the church and so on all of which work upon persons as particular types. Self understanding becomes a way of governing the self in relation to the achievement of the objectives set within each of these sites. These 'technologies of the self' work as self steering devices because they inform the ways in which individuals experience, perceive, evaluate and conduct themselves thus bringing particular types of human beings into being (Foucault, 1988). These technologies are spatialized – that is human beings are rendered knowable across a range of different sites each with a localised repertoire of habits, routines and images of self understanding and self cultivation.

In a whole variety of different locales – not just in sexuality, diet or the promotion of goods for consumption, but also in labour and in the construction of political subjects – the person is presumed to be an active agent, wishing to exercise informed, autonomous and secular responsibility in relation to his or her own destiny. The language of autonomy, identity, self-realisation and the search for fulfilment acts as a grid of regulatory ideals, not in an amorphous cultural space, but in the doctor's consulting room, on the factory floor and in the personal manager's office, in the training of unemployed youth and the construction of political programmes (Rose, 1996a:320).

Various techniques of the self operate to organise conduct in the context of everyday life and to orient this conduct towards a consideration of the kind of person one should aspire to be and the kind of life one should aim to lead (Rose 1996a:296-297). These techniques, therefore, bear an inescapable normative function and this normativity is dependent upon the problematization of conduct[5].

[5] In relation to young women the dominant discourse of femininity for example works to define what conduct is appropriate and problematise conduct that falls outside this definition. An example would be guidance counsellors advising against the pursuit of a

The ideals of self responsibility and self control are established and enacted in relation to those who fall outside of or are marginalised in such a way as to impede the possibility of taking up such a position. These individuals continue to be problematised and made subject to a range of experts and sources of authority who seek to re-educate or 'empower' them through skills training, group relations, and various psychological techniques so that they can enact this type of relation to the self.

Central to Rose's conceptualisation of subjectification is that the way in which one understands one's self and others involves a specific relation to authority. Authority is not a centralised power but is spread across heterogeneous locations. The steering of one's conduct is always done under a real or imagined authority of a particular system of truth (Rose, 1996b:135). The aim of genealogy is to differentiate the 'diverse persons, things, devices, associations, mode of thought, types of judgement that seek, claim, acquire, or are accorded authority' (Rose, 1998:27). How is it though that external authorities come to produce certain types of persons? What Rose seeks to avoid is an answer to this question which would posit human beings having an essential basis to subjectivity.

> The human being, here, is not an entity with a history, but the target of a multiplicity of types of work, more like a latitude and longitude at which different vectors of different speeds intersect. The 'interiority' which so many feel compelled to diagnose is not that of a psychological system, but of a discontinuous surface, a kind of enfolding of exteriority (Rose, 1996b: 142).

Drawing on Deleuze's notion of the fold or pleat, Rose argues that this metaphor allows us to think of human beings in certain ways without postulating an essential interiority. The 'inside' is merely a folding in of that which is exterior thereby incorporating without totalizing, internalising without unifying, collecting together discontinuously in the forms of pleats making surfaces, space, flows and relations (Rose, 1996b: 143). In such an analysis of subjectification that which is enfolded is anything that can acquire authority. Examples include injunctions, advice, techniques, habits of thought and emotion, an array of routines and norms of being human – in short, all the practices and relations through which being

---

career in auto mechanics – a domain traditionally defined as masculine.

constitutes itself (ibid.). The contemporary regime of the self, Rose argues, is to be located within the proliferation of authorities on human conduct over the past one hundred years. Examples include economists, managers, accountants, lawyers, counsellors, therapists, medics, anthropologists, political scientists, and social policy makers. But underlying all these kinds of expertise regarding human conduct lays the 'psy' disciplines which presume an interiority of the subject. Arising in the nineteenth century, psychology invented the 'normal' individual. Within contemporary society it is a discipline which forms the basis for the elaboration of a complex of emotional, interpersonal, and organisational techniques by which the practices of everyday life can be arranged according to an ethic of authentic, autonomous selfhood (Rose, 1998:17). Conduct becomes oriented to this inner self with the goal of maximising self realisation.

The influence of the 'psy' disciplines derives from their 'generosity' – that is, the multiple ways in which they lend themselves to practices within which individuals come to develop a relation to the self. Rose points out that 'contrary to conventional views of the exclusivity of professional knowledge, psy has been happy, indeed eager, to 'give itself away' –to lend its vocabularies, explanations and types of judgement to other professional groups and to implant them within its clients' (Rose, 1996b:139). This knowledge forms the 'psychology of everyday life' and is found in the practices developed by authorities such as school teachers, social workers, and nurses, as well as being inscribed in magazine advice columns, television talk shows, and self help books. These technologies of the self work as a form of governance. Rose draws on Foucault to suggest that government pertains to a 'certain perspective from which on might make intelligible a diversity of attempts by authorities of different sorts to act upon the actions of others in relation to objectives' which include the objectives of national prosperity, harmony, virtue, productivity, social order, discipline, emancipation, self-realisation to name a few' (Rose, 1996b:135). Technologies of the self then are about the ways in which individuals come to regulate themselves and the conduct of others in relation to certain 'truths'.

Authority, particularly those based in the knowledge and practices of the 'psy' disciplines, have historically become linked to the regulatory aims and

organisation of political power. Rose argues that the development of disciplinary knowledge is linked to the wider social context of liberal democratic traditions whose legitimacy depends upon 'free individuals'. All such programs of government have been defined by the problem of 'how free individuals can be governed such that they enact their freedom appropriately' (Rose, 1998:29). The government of others in liberal and democratic systems has always been, in some form, linked to specific strategies for inducing 'free individuals' to govern themselves as 'subjects simultaneously of liberty and responsibility – prudence, sobriety, steadfastness, adjustment, self-fulfilment, and the like' (Rose, 1998:12). At the close of the twentieth century the regime of the self in the context of 'postwelfare' nations depends upon instrumentalizing the capacities and properties of the 'subjects of government'. In contemporary advanced liberal programmes of government freedom is presumed as the desire of each individual to conduct his or her existence as a project for the maximisation of quality of life and as such responsibility for such quality of life becomes individualised (Rose, 1996b:146). This regime is expressed across a range of locales in which it is presumed that subjects are active agents who wish to exercise 'informed, autonomous, and secular responsibility in relation to his own destiny' (ibid.: 145). It is somewhat ironic then that language associated with 'freedom' such as self-realisation, autonomy and self-identity actually form a integral part of contemporary modes of subjectification.

Regimes of subjectification, however, should not be interpreted as deterministic. Resistance to a form of personhood to which one is enjoined to take up is made possible because across a range of locations and practices persons are addressed as different sorts of human being. Demands on the individual are always heterogeneous, competing and conflicting.

> The 'question of agency' as it has come to be termed, poses a false problem. To account for the capacity to act one needs no theory of the subject prior to and resistant to that which would capture it – such capacities for action emerge out of the specific regimes and technologies that machinate humans in diverse ways...agency itself is an effect, a distributed outcome of particular technologies of subjectification that invoke human beings as subjects of a certain type of freedom and supply the norms and techniques by which that freedom is to be recognised, assembled, and played out in specific domains (Rose, 1998:186-187).

In summary, Rose stresses that the self in late modernity should not be approached as a question about the distinctiveness of this historical moment as defined by features such as reflexivity, self scrutiny and individualisation. Instead what should be questioned is whether or not 'there has been a transformation in the ontology through which we think ourselves, in the techniques through which we conduct ourselves, in the relations of authority by means of which we divide ourselves and identify ourselves as certain kinds of person, exercise certain kinds of concern in relation to ourselves, are governed and govern ourselves as human beings of a particular sort' (Rose, 1996a:319-320). If new modes of subjectification have appeared today, in what practices, in relation to what problems and problematizations, within what locales, according to which codes of truth, under the aegis of what authorities, through what techniques, in what new divisions, and in relation to what general strategies of government?' (ibid.).

Conclusion

While Giddens has explored important issues regarding the relationship between the late modern self and transformed social conditions the kinds of questions that can be asked and/or answered within the context of his theories are limited. Instead to think about the 'self' as a particular historical and spatial relation begins to open out the field in which an understanding of current forms of self identity can emerge. The origin of what it means to be a 'self' is not the rational, sovereign subject of liberal humanism. Indeed this interiority of the self is a historical fiction. The subject cannot be presumed as the unitary, self author of social conditions but, rather, as intersecting lines of latitude and longitude, a discontinuous surface into which authorities become enfolded. The meanings attached to being are embedded in specific practices through which individuals come to 'know' themselves as particular sorts of human being. One advantage of this approach is that it explicitly entails relations of power between authorities having the legitimacy to say what constitutes 'personhood' and those whom seek to understand themselves in that way. These ways of inventing the self are both disciplinary and empowering. The effects of subjectification are not unitary, therefore, taking into account the operation of differential and simultaneous

positionings of individuals is essential. This allows us to understand how individuals are both the site of discipline and a source of discipline. A further advantage is that this approach allows one to ask what the consequences are of thinking about the self in particular ways. In short, where Giddens' theoretical account falls short a genealogical approach to subjectification can be used as a way into an investigation of the intricate relationship between self and the social.

In relation to the identities being constructed by young women this approach provides a framework within which to ask about the ways in which young women construct a self that is embedded in every day practices and techniques. How are the selves of young women produced and organised across a range of sites? In what ways does this relationship to the self operate as a form of governance? What are the sources of authority that are enfolded into the self to effect this relation? In what ways are young women and their lives problematised and therefore the object of normalisation? What resistances are made in response to processes which seek to govern their lives? This set of questions and the assumptions underlying them will be used as a broad framework for theorising the relations between a decentred subject and the construction of identity.

In the following chapters identity construction will be located within a context where, due to pluralisation, young women have more choices and options available to them. The aim will be to take into account the criticisms outlined here and suggest ways in which some of these shortcomings may be addressed. The main emphases that will flow through this analysis will be an engagement with Giddens' self-constituting, reflexive subject; his reliance upon binary thinking; his neglect of the relation of difference and identity; and his undertheorisation of the multiple embeddedness of the subject in the social – an issue that is apparent in the extent to which he constructs processes as internally referential. These points will have implications for how we understand the ways young women are engaging with the choices available to them; how they position themselves within sets of relations; and how they enact a particular relation to the self[6]. Turning to chapter three the narratives that the young women produced in the interviews will be introduced in

[6] For example this relation to the self has implications for agency. This will be apparent in

order to establish the kinds of issues which were of central importance to the young women at the time they were interviewed. This discussion will locate these young women within particular contexts, practices, and relations. The narratives will be interpreted in terms of the kind of self that is being produced and provide some insight into the lives of the young women at the time of the interviews, specifically the ways in which they engaged with having to make choices about their futures. Through a close reading of the narratives it will be argued that a particular relation to the self is under construction a self that is autonomous and self constituting with an authentic interiority. This is not a free-floating self, however, but a self that is historically and culturally located within specific practices, knowledges, relations, and institutions all of which contribute to the ways in which the self is constituted. The assumptions of reflexive modernisation will be employed in a reading of the narratives but the reflexive, self constituting subject will be problematised in order to locate individualised narratives as indicative of a particular regime of subjectification.

---

discussion of intimacy and politics in chapters six and seven.

Chapter Three: The Self as Narrative

> In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going (Taylor, 1989:47).

The expression of self identity is often formulated according to the representational convention of narrative (Jervis, 1998; Sarup, 1996; Taylor, 1992). Constructing a narrative as a form of self representation takes into account the past in order to understand the present while also offering an anticipated outline of the form the self will take in the future. As Taylor explains, "I understand my present action in the form of an 'and then': there was A (what I am), and then I do B (what I project to become)" (1989:47). Telling stories about the self is one way in which social actors organise their lives and experiences and in so doing make sense of them (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:68). The formation of an identity is not a process of expressing or discovering a self that is already there but a process in which the self is created through language. Through the acquisition of language we learn to 'give voice meaning to our experience and to understand it according to particular ways of thinking, particular discourses' such that the positions which we identify with constitute our consciousness and structure our sense of ourselves and our subjectivity (Weedon, 1997:32).

To construct a narrative of the self is to locate oneself along a trajectory that gives a coherent structure to past, present and future. This trajectory is the product of a process in which the past is mined for experiences and events that can explain the present. Once chosen, these pieces are selectively drawn together into a narrative account. One's identity, therefore, can take many forms depending on which particular pieces are used and which are discarded. The construction that is yielded by this process highlights what is significant or meaningful to that individual at the particular point in time when they articulate a narrative of the self, therefore, the narrative can vary across both time and space. Events or experiences, interpreted retroactively, can mean different things at different moments so the degree of emphasis and interest given to any event or experience is always subject

to revision. As Giddens emphasises interpretation or reflexive understandings provide the basis for identity.

> Self identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is *the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his own biography.* Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent (emphasis in original, 1991:53).

Despite the degree of variability and impermanence inherent in any specific construction of the self coherence and continuity are achieved through the narrative form because it works to smooth out the various events or experiences chosen for inclusion in the narrative, to join and align, to avoid contradictions, ultimately assuming a forward flow as it is a representational convention governed by principles of linearity. The criteria for either adding or omitting events and experiences from one's narrative of the self are not only dependent upon the degree of perceived significance but the extent to which they contribute to this overall sense of continuity. The narrative emphasis on continuity and development over time lends itself to the unity of self as a project based on a world presented as relatively stable and knowable (Jervis, 1998: 165). Yet, despite the 'completeness' of the story being told the narrative is never a totality because its present form relies upon what is absent.

Identities are actively constructed by the individual at the same time as they tell their story, and although the individual actively engages in constructing a self through telling their story, the telling of the story is done in tension with forces outside the individual that influence, and to a certain extent, circumscribe the structure the narrative can take. When considering someone's identity there is necessarily a process of selection, emphasis, and consideration of the effect of social dynamics such as class, nation, "race", ethnicity, gender and religion. These dynamics are linked together and organised into a narrative but are not necessarily explicitly mentioned in the story. Rather, the working-out of these dynamics and their interrelationships are often not mentioned directly because they are taken for granted. When telling our stories we focus on what happened and what we did

rather than the possible 'theoretical causes'. Nevertheless these issues are implied in the story (Sarup, 1996:15). Dynamics of relations organised around understandings of "race", class, and gender often provide the basis for ascribed statuses and the kinds of narratives that can be constructed. Giddens argues, however, that in late modernity the influence of these dynamics is weakening.

Young Women's Narratives

Understanding identity as a narrative - as telling stories about the self - is a useful strategy for opening up the concept of identity to investigation. One of the objectives of the interviews conducted in this study was to have the young women interviewed position themselves within a narrative. This was achieved by initially having them locate themselves along a trajectory defined by the most important decisions that currently faced them. This exercise required them to consider not only their current situation but what their future direction might look like. Furthermore, this part of the interview raised issues concerning choice which, according to the assumptions of reflexive modernisation, is a central part of the process of engaging in identity formation in late modernity. It is Giddens' position that these self narratives are increasingly shaped by processes of individualisation that require a search for self identity within the context of widening lifestyle options so that self-identity is not about what we are but what we make ourselves (Giddens, 1991:75). Similarly Beck asserts that having to engage with a wide range of choices is not a choice in itself (1992:135). These assumptions exist, however, in a state of tension with the assertion that ascribed characteristics like gender or class not only impact upon the kinds of choices one has available but also how one is able to negotiate them. Trajectories may be chosen but they are also ascribed.

Narrative accounts of the self can be analysed according to their constituent parts: content, form, and function[1]. The content of the narrative reveals the social actor's interpretation of key events and experiences in her life which account for

[1] This analysis method is influenced by the discussion of narrative analysis in Coffey and Atkinson, (1996:54-82).

how and why it is that she has arrived at the present moment and gives insight into the direction she projects her life to take. Narratives can also be examined for their underlying form. The form is relevant because key features and defining characteristics of the form narratives take are due in part to the mediating influence of values, social relations, knowledges, and institutional settings located within particular cultural and political contexts. This embeddedness is about the external influences which effect the kind of story that can be told[2]. Thirdly, narratives are not simply transparent representations of identities that exist independently of the telling. By looking closely at the narratives produced one can ask questions about how the kind of narrative constructed operates to perform specific functions because constructing the self in a specific way has certain effects. Analysing narratives from this perspective requires a consideration of the purposes served by constructing a particular story about the self[3]?

This chapter will draw upon these ideas in order to understand the kinds of narratives produced by the young women in this study. The aim of the analysis will be to first establish the point the young women interviewed were at in planning their lives and to indicate what kinds of issues were important to them[4]. An analysis of their narratives and the choices they were having to make will produce insight into the kind of self that was being produced by them. Using Giddens' theory of reflexive modernisation the narratives will be examined as trajectories in which a consistent relation to the self is constructed – a self that is defined by the features of autonomy and authenticity. However, this reading will be also be analysed as the production of a particular relation to the self or, as outlined in chapter two, as the product of a specific regime of subjectification[5].

---

2 To think of narratives as embedded in social relations relates to the positioning of the individual within ascribed statuses.

3 For instance narratives can be cautionary tales which perform moral functions. See Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 63).

4 For a description of the research sites where the interviews took place please refer to appendix one.

5 Rose (1996a, 1996b,1998,) describes regimes of subjectification as being concerned with the relations that human beings have established with themselves – relations in which they come to understand and see themselves as selves of a particular type.

Life Planning - Past, Present, Future

Giddens states that life plans are 'something of an inevitable concomitant of post-traditional social forms' (1991:85). These life plans provide the substance of the reflexively organised trajectory in which the self is located through the ordering of a narrative. He argues that the life span is less constrained by external factors such as place, social relations, kinship, and traditional rites with the result that the continuity and coherent flow of the narrative becomes internally referential as external supports and guides can no longer be taken for granted to determine the form taken by life trajectories. However, the same processes which release the individual from constraints of tradition also intensify the experience of uncertainty, therefore, choices about lifestyle options exist within the structure of life plans reflexively negotiated under conditions of increased doubt.

The interviews began by having the young women engage with the notion of choice in relation to the life plans they were constructing. Asking the young women in this study about their choices provided an effective point of entry into the ways in which they interpreted their lives and which experiences they identified as significant to their self definition[6]. The discussion of life plans started by asking them to talk about the most important decision they'd had to make in the past 12 months. As all of the research sites were places related to the organisation of young women's lives and the choices regarding their future it is not surprising that all of the young women were preoccupied at the time of the interview with their plans for careers, training and education. The narratives produced were embedded in relations with parents, teachers, careers guidance counsellors and friends all of which worked to shape the context within which they had to think about their lives in relation to the future. Despite their varied location in terms of ascribed

6 Experience is important because as Scott (1992) argues it is through experience that the individual is constituted in specific ways. The production of the subject through experience is discussed further in chapter five with regards to how experience works to effect the relation between self and other.

trajectories[7] they all broadly shared the position of having to confront qualitatively similar decisions about which direction they wanted to pursue with regards to education, training and careers.

In the 12 month period prior to being interviewed all of the young women said that they had to engage with decisions about what they wanted to do next in their lives. These decisions were clearly guided by an orientation to the future so that the trajectories they constructed followed a coherent line of progress from past, present, to future. However, the form of the trajectories and nature of the narratives varied. For some of the young women the narrative told was relatively straightforward. There was little conflict for them because the past, present and future fit together in a highly consistent manner. One effect of this consistency was that the notion of choice constituted only a minimal aspect of their experience and wasn't as central to the narrative as it was in other cases. Emilia, a 17 year old who had just completed her first year of sixth form was planning to continue her studies at university. In her story choice is less relevant than inevitability.

> Shelley: Did you feel any pressure trying to decide which a-levels to take?
> Emilia: No, not really because I really didn't have that much choice because I've only ever been good at the arts so sciences weren't really an option anyway. I always knew which path I was going on. *(Emilia, 17 years old, lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

Michelle who was sixteen and had left school was interviewed at a careers guidance centre. Her goal was to find a job working as a beauty therapist and then one day set up her own business. Like Emilia her narrative is structured by consistency because her decision to leave school wasn't constructed as a choice but as an inevitability. One effect of a consistent narrative is that it produces and retains a particular relation to the self. For Emilia and Michelle they explain their decisions

---

[7] Ascribed trajectories and statuses will be used in this analysis to refer to the positioning of the individual within patterns of social relations. Such relations are organised for instance by gender, "race", age, social class and ethnicity. As these relations exist as somewhat stable patterns they pre-exist the individual who comes to be positioned within them. As such they are not chosen. Bradley (1996:212) makes the useful point that we may be active agents in the construction of our identities but some aspects of our selves cannot be chosen i.e. we do not choose to be white, or working class, or women etc.

within the context of understanding themselves as certain kinds of people: people who go on to university or people who aim to leave school at age sixteen.

> Shelley: What was the most important decision you had to make in the past twelve months?
> Michelle: What to do after leaving school.
> Shelley: At what point did you decide to leave school?
> Michelle: All my life. *(Michelle, 16 years old, Careers Guidance).*

The linearity that the narrative form tends to assume must be achieved by the actor in the act of construction. Life events and experiences do not automatically fall into a consistent line as in the cases of Emilia or Michelle, therefore, many of the narratives told by these young women involved a negotiation of inconsistencies, interruptions, and conflicts in order for linearity be accomplished thus preserving a particular relation to the self – a self which guides how choices are made. Being aware of the existence of different trajectories meant that for some young women creating self narratives involved locating themselves in relation to those other available options. However, it wasn't simply the case of indiscriminately making a choice amongst different options because some options were understood as being less consistent with the self they were creating. Constructing a self is about managing these contradictions. For example in some cases the inconsistencies were related to an understanding of their own life chances and being able to choose a course that subverted what could be expected to happen. The idea of 'what is meant to happen to someone life me' refers to the impact of ascribed trajectories. Frequently, these kinds of expectations were tied to the influence of tradition or the past, for example family background, ethnicity or gender.

For Georgia, an eighteen year old who was completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, her goal of going to university is consistent with the way in which she views her past and the present but it contradicts what her family anticipated. It seems that going to university was perceived as a choice that she would not have available to her because nobody else in her family had pursued higher education. Her decision in the past 12 months to go to university is not seen by her as a choice

but as something she has to do because it is *so inconsistent* with what was expected to be possible.

> Shelley: Did you feel any pressure trying to decide which university to go to?
> Georgia: No. Not really. It was never really a choice of whether to go to university or get a job. I've always wanted to go university. It hasn't been my Mum or Dad pressuring me. They would have stood by whatever I wanted to do but I'm the first person in the family to have got this far ever. So they're all really proud of me saying, 'You're going to go aren't you?'. I've always wanted to go but even if I didn't I think I might have gone just because they'd be so proud of me and I'd really be letting them down. *(Georgia, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

Negotiating inconsistency was also an integral part of Joanne's narrative. She was nineteen years old and had a two year old son. At the time of the interview she was employed as a receptionist in a photography studio. She accounted for what she perceived as her current level of success as due in part to the confidence she developed during her participation in a youth outreach life skills program. In her narrative she revealed that she is violating the trajectory that as a single mother she is 'meant to be on'. This inconsistency between an ascribed narrative and one in which she can make choices is an important part of the self she is constructing.

> Shelley: Why did you end up getting involved with Youthworks? What was there about it that you thought was good for you?
> Joanne: When I fell pregnant with Jason a lot of people said, 'She's not going to do nothing with her life. Now she's ruined her life'. But it was like I wanted to get more grades so I've got more things to aim for so I thought I might as well do this. I'm not doing anything else and I should try my hardest at it and it did work out because I got a job through it. *(Joanne, 19 years old, Youthworks programme).*

Joanne acknowledges that she has escaped a trajectory that, due to her being a young, single mother, was expected. For her escaping this fate was a matter of choosing to get involved in the life skills program. Her awareness of the inconsistency in her narrative is also apparent when she compares herself to her cousins who don't have any children and work in a packing factory which she says is what *she should be* doing instead of the relatively higher status of working in a

photography studio. Her awareness of the structure of the 'single mother' narrative that is expected of her is derived from the way in which other people position her for example through media representations. This draws attention to other narratives that pre-exist the individual who comes to be positioned within that narrative. The structuring of these narratives influence the positioning of the self within one's own narrative.

> Joanne: I'm on family credit now because I'm working which is a big relief. I used to hate queuing up for income support and you go home and It's always on TV about that young women get pregnant to get money and to get houses where I've done none of that because I've got a job so I'm not on income support and I haven't got my own house. I'm living with my parents so I haven't done none of what they're saying young women are doing.

For Joanne, the violation of an anticipated trajectory produced a positive outcome, however, for Louise, also a single mother, the altering of her anticipated trajectory was experienced as a loss of her sense of self. Louise was 21 years old and had a 4 year old daughter whom she had lost custody of due to her addiction to heroin. At the time of the interview she was living in hostel having recently decided to leave an extremely abusive relationship. The decision to leave this man, who introduced her to heroin, and to overcome her addiction were the most important decisions she had made in the past 12 months. Louise began the interview by locating herself in relation to what was once expected for 'someone like her' by saying that she was from a good background and wasn't a 'snob or anything' but wasn't 'hostel material'. Reflecting on the past when she had 'everything going for her' she constructed a story about having her life 'perfectly sorted'. Through her introduction to heroin and the treatment of an abusive boyfriend, however, she told a story about 'losing everything' – her good job, a flat furnished with nice belongings, money, her health and, most importantly, her daughter.

> Louise: I still can't believe that I'm living here and everything. It's a total shock. Let's put it this way, if someone would have said to me when I was 18 that when you're 21 you're going to be a heroin addict and have your

> daughter taken away and be a victim of domestic violence and be completely mentally tortured for a year I would never had believed them.
> Shelley: If you look ahead what do you see yourself doing in a year from now?
> Louise: I'll have a job, a nice home. I'll be with my daughter. *(Louise, 21 years old, Youthworks programme).*

In her story Louise reorients herself to a future that is much happier than the recent past but more significantly it is a future that is more consistent with where she has come from (i.e. 'not hostel material'). For her this is a return to where she feels she should have been if she hadn't met her ex-boyfriend. It is a return to where she is *really meant to be* because in her view, her current trajectory was never something she would have chosen for herself. If it weren't for meeting him she says she would now be in her first year of university, still have her job at a pub, have a nice boyfriend and still have her daughter who would be starting Catholic school. Louise has left a trajectory that would have been characterised by choice and entered one in which choice enters only marginally into her narrative because of addiction. The inconsistency between these two different trajectories and the implications for her relation to choice are readily apparent.

> Louise: The next year is most important because a lot of it is going to depend on getting off drugs. You can't do anything when you're an addict. You know you can't do anything because you are a drug addict. Especially with heroin addiction because you wake up one day and you've not got it and you want it. You wake up one day and need it because you are sick. It's like a disease in a way almost. If you've not got it you can't even get up and do anything.

In summary the form of these narratives has been analysed in terms of their relationship to consistency. How one negotiates consistency or inconsistency in life events is significant because this negotiation works to establish and maintain a particular relation to the self. Choices are engaged with via an understanding of the self as being a particular sort of person. This understanding is influenced by but not determined by ascribed statuses. Narratives, therefore, work to construct and preserve a relation to the self and this relation then influences how choices are interpreted.

The most important decisions these young women identified as having to make also involved preserving an identity particularly in regard to the self they had yet to become. When constructing their narratives many of the young women spoke of having to reject options that would put them on alternate trajectories. Again this indicated that they were aware that their lives could follow a range of different paths. The criteria for accepting or rejecting these options depended on whether they were consistent with the kind of self under production. Katy, an 18 year old who was just completing her first year of sixth form said that she decided to stay on at school and do a-levels so that she could go to university, a goal that is consistent with her desire to have a career. Her choice to do this was informed by the other option she perceived as available - an option that is inconsistent with the way in which sees herself.

> Shelley: Why did you decide to stay on at school?
> Katy: I think partly because I've seen other people like my Aunties who don't have jobs and they're not educated and I don't want to go the same route and be unhappy and be a housewife and bring up kids. I want a career. *(Katy, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

Sasha, a 17 year old who was also finishing her first year of sixth form said that the most important decision she had to make in the past 12 months was the decision to refuse to consent to an arranged marriage. This decision was heavily influenced by the limits it would put on her life - primarily that it would prevent her from pursuing and achieving the future she was constructing for herself. To accept the conditions of an arranged marriage, which would be consistent with an ascribed trajectory, would be highly inconsistent with the trajectory she is choosing for herself.

> Shelley: What were the main factors that you found were influencing you?
> Sasha: I didn't really like his father. Well...they're quite a strict family. They're quite strict about what they let women do. They don't really want you to work. Not to study. You know, be home based and stuff and I'm not really like that at all. I want a career and stuff...It wasn't like they were going to get me married straight away. It's just a case of 'yes in the near future' but I thought no. It's just that what I want to do in the near future

> would clash with that. *(Sasha, 17 years old completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

Sasha talked at length about marriage and the conflict the expectations coming from her Asian community caused for her. This conflict and the way it affected her choices formed an important part of her narrative which to some extent was about forging an identity that was made possible by having choices available – specifically being able to say no to the marriage even though it was expected.

Other young women faced equally difficult choices. Lauren, a 19 year old who was looking for employment said that the most important decision she'd had to make in the past year was to have an abortion. Lauren reflected upon her experience and constructed her choice to have the abortion as a difficult one but one that was made in order to carry on with her goals and aspirations. Her anticipation of the future was used as the basis for making this decision.

> Shelley: What factors did you take into account when you were trying to decide?
> Lauren: I would be restricted in terms of the jobs I could go for because of the hours. I would feel bad leaving my baby with my Mum all the time and sorting out the money. I'd have to go for a job which would cover everything. My Mum is on benefits so obviously a lot of money would be going on the baby and I couldn't really give that baby the home I'd wanted to or the life I want so I considered that. I never wanted a child young. My Mum did. She had me when she was twenty but she had an abortion at sixteen as well which her parents forced her into. She knew what kind of stress I was under but in the end it all worked out for the best. Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to travel or anything like that as much as I wanted to. I'm not knocking single mothers, which I would have been, but it's just not for me yet. It was a very hard decision. *(Lauren, 19 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

Lauren uses her Mum as a point of reference and acknowledges that, unlike her Mum, she has choices available to her but her decision to have the abortion is formulated through a particular relation to her self – a self that will be able to exercise autonomy.

Orientations to the Future

Once the young women had located themselves within a narrative based upon the decisions they had faced recently they were asked to look ahead to the near future and talk about what they saw themselves doing in one year's time. For nearly all of them this projection was defined by education or career goals. In general they created a future oriented to goals which they had already begun to work towards. The decisions they had already made; to leave school, to do a-levels, or to enrol in a training scheme for instance, had begun to lead them down different routes. The choices available to them and kinds of decisions they faced reflected this. In order to understand the choices described in their narratives the young women were asked to talk about their goals. This discussion begins to reveal what kinds of things they wanted from life and, quite significantly, what things they thought they could get, again drawing attention to the notion of how choice enters into the narratives.

Twenty of the thirty three young women were anticipating that they would be going to university. All of the young women from the private school and the comprehensive school said they were heading for university. With the exception of one young woman who was going to take a year out and work before deciding on whether to go to university, all of the young women who were completing a GNVQ planned to go to university. Of the young women who were interviewed at the careers advice centre three expected to be on a training scheme in a year's time, five expected to be working in jobs that met with their interests while one young woman hoped to be working but taking some evening courses to improve her qualifications. The young women who were involved in the youth outreach program had less certainty about what lay ahead for them. For Louise, the goal of getting her own home and a job were paramount as achieving this would contribute to regaining custody of her daughter but she said it all hinged on overcoming heroin addiction. AJ who was just starting to develop self confidence and gain some practical skills in office work still felt too unsure of what was to happen next in her life to speculate

while Joanne hoped that she could continue to work part-time at the photography studio.

The narratives told reflected consistency with the present but they weren't unproblematic. Constructions of the future were expressed with a degree of uncertainty and a considerable amount of tension surrounded their deliberations. They were aware of having choices available to them and the importance of navigating these choices, however, in some cases uncertainty about the future was not due to a lack of choices but was instead exacerbated by external pressure to make a choice. Having to choose and the pressures associated with this fact were true of young women regardless of the trajectory they were on.

> Shelley: What do you think is the most important decision you will have to make next year?
> Anna: I suppose university courses. There's so many to choose from. I don't know quite which way I want to go.
> Shelley: Are you experiencing any pressure right now about figuring what to do next?
> Anna: I suppose so. The school doesn't exert pressure but they make it clear to you that you're going to have to fill in application forms and it gets quite confusing. I suppose I do have the summer to think about it but it is a worry always in the back of your mind - that you're going to have to make that decision. I might go and see the careers advisor or someone who is neutral and can give me their opinion of where would be best to go.
> Shelley: Are you concerned right now about making the wrong decision?
> Anna: Yeah because it just makes you realise that it's not a game anymore. It's not just like GCSEs. You're older and it's going to affect you for a long time. It's quite frightening. *(Anna, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

> Shelley: What is the most important decision you'll have to make in the next year?
> Morgan: The problem of a job. You know like do I go back onto training? Do I go for a proper job? And it's like...because if you go on training, you're working toward something aren't you? But my Mom will be giving me grief, saying, 'But it's only a low wage', so do I go against her wishes and go back on training or do I go for a proper job and make her happy? And make me unhappy really because it's going to be a no hope job isn't it? It's going to go nowhere. *(Morgan, 18 years old, Careers Guidance centre).*

The final point on their life trajectories that the young women were asked to describe was where they saw themselves in five years time. This projection was harder for them to produce because it was less concrete - the activities they were involved with now did relate to that point in the future but not as clearly as they did to only one year's time. Nonetheless the future was constructed in a coherent relation to the things they had planned for the next year and was primarily defined in relation to their career goals. These discussions revealed where the young women hoped to be although not necessarily where they would be. For the young women who were planning to continue their education they saw the successful completion of their qualifications and the beginning of their careers having transpired in five years. This was also true for the young women who were on training programmes or aiming to get onto a training programme. Career progression defined their goals and this was true whether the trajectory followed a path through university into a profession or through leaving school at sixteen years old to enter the workplace as soon as possible. In the following excerpts the young women discuss their goal to progress in their chosen educational and career paths. These narratives function as stories about achievement and success thereby supporting a particular relation to the self.

> Shelley: What do you see yourself doing in five years from now?
> Laura: Oh God! Hopefully, fingers crossed, I'll have my law degree and be working as a solicitor in somebody's office and making lots of money! But It's not important. Just making a living and doing well. *(Laura, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

> Lianne: Hopefully a manager of a shop or just a little shop of my own. I'd like to do something in cars or motorbikes. Retail manager or something like that just so that I could have some control over someone else and not be doing what everyone else is telling me to do for the rest of my life. *(Lianne, 16 years old, inquiring about training programmes at the careers guidance centre).*

> Georgia: I'll be twenty three...If I do well in my psychology degree I would love to carry on and do another course to become a psychologist. *(Georgia, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

When these young women spoke about their pursuit of education and career goals they revealed that achievement and independence were of central importance to their self-definitions. These values were apparent in the majority of accounts regardless of whether the route to the goal was via university, vocational training programmes or work experience. Central themes in their accounts were about the importance of job satisfaction and progression informed by the underlying value of independence.

> Victoria: I'd rather do office work because I want to do something with good prospects that can get you far. Yeah you have to be able to move up in it. I wouldn't like to be a receptionist because in way I see you as being a slave doing something for other people and you just stay there all the time and you never move up. *(Victoria, 17 years old, inquiring about training programmes at the careers guidance centre).*

> Sarah C.: If I failed all my exams and didn't have anything else I could do then maybe I would consider working for my Dad. I mean I don't think like that but my best friend is just so laid back that she'd just go work for her Dad. But I want to get more. *(Sara C. 16 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

In the discussions about where they saw themselves in five years education, training, achieving qualifications and planning for careers continued to form the main part of the narrative but marriage, having children and thoughts about 'settling down' also began to emerge. Considerations of the impact of marriage on the narratives they were creating revealed that generally getting married and having children were regarded as possible choices but as ones they would not make at that point in their lives. It was perceived that this would prevent them from advancing in their trajectory again highlighting the centrality of independence and autonomy to their construction of the self.

> Shelley: Where do you see yourself in five years?
> Shayne: Oh hopefully I'll have a degree by then! Hopefully. I'd really like to get a degree - do my A-levels and get a degree. Not settle down but pursue my career then possibly settle down after that. *(Shayne, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

> Lucy: I'll be twenty two. I have no idea. No idea. Hopefully...well it depends on going to university and getting a job or something. I won't be married then hopefully. *(Lucy, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

> Claire: I don't want to get settled down. Not in five years. I want to have my life to do what I want to do then say mid-twenties settle down and get a house. I want my career and to enjoy my life. *(Claire, 16 years old, looking for a job at Careers Guidance).*

There were exceptions to this sceptical evaluation of the prospect of 'settling down' in five years time though. Joanne a nineteen year old single mother with a two year old son was working part-time as a photo studio receptionist. Her goal was to continue working her way up into a higher position and be working full time once her son was in school. Marriage entered into her narrative because it is the only way she could perceive getting her own home, something which was a very important component of her goal of achieving independence. The desire for independence constituted a central part of most of the young women's narratives but whereas many of the young women interpreted marriage and having children as a restriction to their independence, Joanne saw her independence as contingent upon finding a partner who she could depend upon for financial support.

> Joanne: I'd like to have my own house I think. It might be expensive and I wouldn't be able to give Jason as much as he does want but I don't want to live on a council estate on my own. I want my house and the only way I can do that is to meet someone who loves us both and can support us. So I think I'm going to be at home for a few more years yet which I don't mind but it would be nice to have a bit more independence of my own. *(Joanne, 19 years old, Youthworks programme).*

If marriage was discussed by most of the young women with ambivalence because of the impact it might have on independence and building a career then this was particularly true of the young Asian women interviewed. They all spoke of the pressure they were under to marry at an early age and they were all resisting it. Prea who was nineteen years old said she wouldn't mind settling down but for her settling down meant living with a boyfriend before deciding to marry. She admits that this 'won't happen because my parents would just go mental if I said I was

going to live with my boyfriend to see what it was like'. Prea located the origin of their attitudes within the Asian community's belief system. Katy, a seventeen year old and also Asian, was experiencing significant pressure from her Mum to pursue an university education but was also being pressured to marry. In these examples the ascribed trajectory of getting married and having children is derived not only from their embeddedness in gender relations but also from the intersection of their gender with expectations held by their ethnic community. Asserting the choice to do otherwise, therefore, produces conflict.

> Shelley: Do you see anything else happening in 5 years time?
> Katy: Probably marriage. That will be another burden that my Mum is putting on top of me. To get married and have kids.
> Shelley: Is that something that you want?
> Katy: Well I've told her in maybe seven years and then another seven years after to have kids but she wants it now. My sister has already got married and now she's talking about having children. I don't think I want to do the same. *(Katy, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School)*

The challenge of incorporating intimate relationships, child rearing, and domesticity into narratives built upon independence and individualisation will be further explored in chapter six. In summary the content of these narratives of the self reveal that planning for further education, training, and careers are of particular importance to the young women interviewed. Constructing these narratives entailed a navigation of a range of options which were understood in relation to the kind of story they were trying to coherently create and sustain. The form of the narratives reveal that choices and decisions are made in tension with both the desire to preserve a particular relation to the self and with the influence of ascribed trajectories. These narratives functioned to preserve a particular relation to the self the self as autonomous, independent, and goal oriented. Once established this relation operates to inform the negotiation of further choices and decisions.

Uncertainty, Doubt and Fateful Moments

Central to theories of reflexive modernisation is the claim that availability of choice does not necessarily yield more control over one's life because the processes

which lead to increased choice also bring about the weakening of external sources of authority and the anchoring of external reference points. In view of the expanding possibilities for individual life plans in late modernity attempts to colonise[8] the future are key moments in creating certainty within conditions of contingency. The individual must choose a life style and assemble a life plan but without knowing for sure if one plan is better than any of the other possible ones. Thus the pervasive experience of uncertainty is manifest in radical doubt which filters into most aspects of day-to-day life in late modernity (Giddens, 1991:181).

The characterisation of late modernity as a condition of increased uncertainty is derived from an understanding of modernity as 'a system geared to the domination of nature and the reflexive making of history' (Giddens, 1991:107). This system increasingly comes to be governed by the belief in control of the environment at both the individual and collective level as it becomes more difficult to see the future as something that will unfold according to fate or pre-determination. Because individuals confront the future as an open realm which must be colonised the calculation of risks becomes central to the construction of life plans. In so doing 'the more the individual seeks reflexively to forge a self-identity, the more he or she will be aware that current practices shape future outcomes...assessment of risk – of the balance of risk and opportunity – becomes the core element of the personal colonising of future domains' (Giddens, 1991:129).

The suggestion that risk and uncertainty must continually be negotiated could seem to contribute to the difficulty of being unable to establish or maintain coherence in day to day life. Fragmentation, confusion and hesitancy seem more likely outcomes than the construction of a coherent and rewarding sense of identity. While this may be a possible outcome individuals are for the most part able to unproblematically engage in a project of the self because they are able to 'bracket

---

8 The term 'colonisation' has problematic connotations. In this respect it is an undesirable term but it is argued in this study that it was consistent with the kind of relation to the self constructed throughout the interviews i.e. a self that is able to exercise control over future events. As such it can be thought to be constitutive of a particular regime of the self. I am indebted to Sasha Roseneil for pointing out the problematic nature of the term.

out' uncertainty through basic trust. Here Giddens relies upon Goffman's notion of the *Umwelt* a core of accomplished normalcy with which individuals and groups surround themselves (Giddens, 1991:127). Trust works to secure the ongoing engagement with daily life in such a way that the future, although uncertain and characterised by risk, is experienced as manageable and subject to individual control through the calculation of risk and the concomitant assessment of different life plans and courses of action. Modern anxiety is fundamentally a product of risk calculations and having to screen out contingencies so that life planning can be a manageable task.

Although the pervasive nature of risk does not lead to a complete breakdown in the construction of coherent identities Giddens does suggest that at certain moments the experience of risk and uncertainty is intensified and breaks through the 'protective cocoon' that trust provides to the individual. It is during these 'fateful moments' that the effects of the loss of external anchoring points are intensified and ontological security comes under strain. During these moments individuals are called upon to make crucial decisions that carry great consequence for that individual's future. Examples of such moments include taking examinations, deciding to get married or divorced, deciding on a course of study, going on strike, giving up one job in favour of another, hearing the result of a medical test, losing a large amount of money in a gamble or winning a large amount of money in a lottery (Giddens, 1991:113). It is during these moments that the individual becomes particularly aware of the consequences of their decisions knowing that they 'must launch into something new, knowing that a decision made, or a specific course of action followed, has an irreversible quality' (Giddens, 1991:114).

The decisions faced by these young women could be said to constitute such fateful moments. Despite having relatively well defined goals and trajectories to which they oriented their decisions they were experiencing pressure to choose a path for their lives. For example, there was some anxiety about not achieving the goals described in their narratives and not knowing what outcomes would be the

result of their planning. Uncertainty was expressed in a variety of ways. For some of the young women it was linked to resources. For Lucinda, a 17 year old completing lower sixth form at a private school, the potential for her goals to be thwarted was expressed as a concern. Similarly, Shannon expressed worries about the possibility that she won't be able to get a job despite the effort she is putting into gaining qualifications at college and university.

> Shelley: What might prevent you from achieving your future goals?
> Lucinda: There'll probably be loads of things I expect. Maybe money could. I might be able to not afford to live or something. You've got to think of everything. You can't just sort of...you've got to be able to cover yourself. *(Lucinda 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School)*

> Shannon: I don't think anything is under anyone's control with things changing so fast. I think it is pretty much under your control because you can say what you want to go into but at the end of the day you can't say if you're guaranteed a job within a hospital or guaranteed a nursing job. That is a factor. You're not guaranteed a job which is a hard thing. *(Shannon, 18 years old completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

Ultimately uncertainty requires a strategy if the individual is to continue with the project of the self. This idea of having to 'cover oneself' within a context of uncertainty was central to almost all of the narratives constructed. This meant developing ways to mitigate against uncertainty where uncertainty was constructed as manageable through the effect of individual efforts. One of the ways of seeking to do this was through placing a belief in self efficacy often expressed in the form of a desire to take control of one's life. This was a highly individualised solution in which responsibility for success or failure was placed solely on the individual. The value of achieving independence emerged again, expressed here as a belief in the autonomous self.

> Shelley: Do you think the future is under your control?
> Lucinda: Well. I wouldn't leave it to anyone else! I don't like relying on other people anyway. I think if you're going to do something it's better to do it yourself. You're going to get it done then. I mean of course if I really wanted something then I would probably have to rely on people I could

trust. I'd have to put my faith in them. *(Lucinda, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

Lynn: I wanted to get into nursing so I arranged my courses. I've got the grades which I'm going to deserve at the end of the course so I'm in control of most of my life and how well I do. *(Lynne, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College)*

Shayne: Oh to a certain extent. I mean you've got self control over yourself if you're out to get what you want then definitely you can do it – if you have strong enough will but sometimes you tend to find that some people are just too reliant upon others, not independent enough and that is what stops them I think. *(Shayne, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School)*

In these examples the future is held to be under control due to the actions and the attitudes of the individual. Seizing control of one's life was not only deemed possible by making one's own decisions and working hard but was also seen as one's responsibility if the narrative being told was to transpire. More specifically one of the most frequent ways in which it was understood that one could alleviate uncertainty was through pursuing education and training. To do so was interpreted as one way of avoiding a narrow range of options in order that future potential be maximised.

Shelley: What do you think would happen to you if you didn't continue with your education from this point on?
Sarah: I think there would be less chance of me doing what I want to do. I don't think that I would get a proper job like a lawyer or something like that. I think I'd just...I might be able to...well I don't know if I could get a job which means I wouldn't get any money. And I'd probably just end up living at home. *(Sarah, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

Shannon: This course has given me a qualification to go on to do further training so that's why I really want to do the training, to get further on in life instead of stopping here.
Shelley: What do you think would happen if you stopped?
Shannon: Honestly I think if I stopped where I am now, I could go into a job. I could get a job but it wouldn't be what I want to do and it wouldn't be very high paid. I could stop now and go into auxiliary nursing at the end of the day though It's really being a slave to other people and beneath people

> like the matron. I want to be in nursing rather than in the lower, not class, I don't mean anything like that. It's just a lower job where you can't do as much as the nurses do. *(Shannon, eighteen years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

Within the trajectories constructed the young women clearly expressed an awareness of having choices and being able to take advantage of these choices. While the future presented an element of the unknown proliferation of choice provided a source of confidence that the future, although in some ways out of ones' control, could still be successfully shaped according to what one wanted. Educational options, for example, included a variety of different routes to gaining qualifications and this gave some assurance that if one route became obstructed then another way forward would be possible. Therefore, the notion of having choices available enters into a map of the future defined by divergent paths upon which contingency plans could be made.

> Shelley: What if you don't achieve your goal of getting the grades to go to university?
> Katy: If that did happen I think I would leave school and do some more a-levels at college and then start again and hopefully do my best or if not I can do another course that's equivalent of a-levels and then go on to university. *(Katy, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

> Nikky: It's like in a way all blocked together like you've got a-levels, then university and a job. With each thing, I know what I want from each of them so I just take it as it comes basically. You know if things don't go right then take another path and go do something else. *(Nikky, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

> Joanne: I'm going to see how this job goes because I can upgrade myself in this. Like if I ever wanted to do photography then I could go to college and I'd have a good chance at getting into photography so I can higher myself up in this job really. So I'm going to see how this job goes and if it doesn't go well and I end up leaving for some reason I can go back to college and train for something different. *(Joanne, 19 years old, participant in a Youthworks programme).*

The construction of a narrative about the autonomous self functions throughout these discussions to mitigate against uncertainty with the effect of reinforcing that

particular relation to the self. In the next section, the narrative functions to support this relation to the self as an essential interiority.

Authenticity

In many of the accounts produced by the young women about their decisions and life plans the structuring of the narrative was held consistent by the principle of authenticity which acted as a moral thread running throughout. The value of being 'true to oneself' provided an underlying resource which could be drawn upon when real or potential conflicts and contradictions needed to be resolved. Indeed the notion of there being an authentic self was employed as a strategy for confronting situations in which a choice had to be made in order to resolve a dilemma. Giddens links the ideal of authenticity to the project of the self by suggesting that in late modernity the goal of self actualisation depends upon being able to transcend barriers to acting authentically. Self knowledge, therefore, is the key to disentangling the true from the false self.

> To be true to oneself means finding oneself, but since this is an active process of self-construction it has to be informed by overall goals – those of becoming free from dependencies and achieving fulfilment. Fulfilment is in some part a moral phenomenon, because it means fostering a sense that one is a 'good', a 'worthy person'...(Giddens, 1991:79).

In the interviews to speak and act from a position of authenticity was perceived as a way of safeguarding the 'real' self from external pressures. A series of vignettes about young women facing crucial decisions were used as a way of exploring the perceptions of how choices and conflicting demands should be navigated. In these vignettes tension is created by the location of the central character at the heart of a problem in which there is no clearly defined 'right' decision but definitely a dilemma which cannot be disregarded. In response to this ambiguity the notion of authenticity provided a way in which to ground and justify decisions[9]. Although this particular vignette is in substance about one's relation to

---

9 The vignette read as follows: Catherine is one of the best students in her class. She is generally very self confident in school and around her friends but often in social situations,

others, it was also read as implicitly being about one's relation to oneself. In the following responses an emphasis is placed on being one's 'real self' – that beneath the person Catherine is trying to be there is in fact an authenticity constituting her essential interiority.

> Alice: Be herself because it will just carry on forever and she'll forget who her **actual self is**. If she stood up to them and was herself then they'd admire her more in end anyway for having her own opinion. I've known people who are like that and just agree with everything that you say and it can be really annoying. You just want them to get some of their own ideas really. *(Alice, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School)*

> Lynne: I think she should just be herself. Try to as much as she can be herself because there's no point hiding behind a mask because you just get confused about your feelings completely. It's like being two different people really. I think that when they say awful things about her friends she should just speak up. *(Lynn, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College)*

> Lianne: Instead of trying to fit in and be like everyone else she should be herself because then no one is going to know you for **the real you** and they're just going to think that you are fake and stupid. *(Lianne, 16 years old, inquiring about training programmes at Careers Guidance).*

While authenticity provided a moral grounding for the project of the self it also has wider implications. For Giddens because the project of the self is rooted in a morality of authenticity the project itself contains potential to become the foundation for a remoralising of day to day life as reflexive identities provide the basis for the development of life politics centred around the rights of self actualisation and issues pertaining to self identity (Giddens, 1991:226). The notion that a politics of self actualisation can arise out of the project of the self is further explored in chapter seven.

---

especially when boys are around, she feels awkward. To fit in she tries to be like everyone else. She pretends to agree with everything they say even when they say unkind things about people she knows. Every time this happens she feels disappointed in herself afterwards for not just being herself. She feels bad for giving into pressure to be someone who she isn't but it just keeps happening. What should she do?

Detraditionalised Narratives?

To what extent are these narratives indicative of the processes of detraditionalisation which theorists of reflexive modernisation claim result in individualised biographies? Returning to the three primary elements of narrative – content, form, and function how can these narratives be assessed? The content of these narratives is about having to forge a trajectory based on making decisions about the future, particularly with regard to choosing from a range of educational and training options. The act of choosing was structured within the narrative trajectory by continuity and coherence so as to maintain a particular relation to the self. In short, choices were made in order to maintain a particular construction of the self as autonomous. The form the narratives took reflected how choices were interpreted in view of both the kind of self these young women were constructing and the influence of ascribed statuses. Significantly, the meaning of choice emerged in a relation to ascribed trajectories such that there was a tension between the choices one has and the choices that one is 'meant to have' as circumscribed by the effects of social relations such as gender, ethnicity, class and "race". By erving as an internal point of reference for the navigation of contradictions and conflicts authenticity provided an underlying moral guide. The subject produced in these accounts is one who is able to choose the future and, in so doing, able to control contingency. In summary, the function of the narratives was to produce and preserve a particular relation to the self the autonomous, authentic individual.

As argued in chapter two this kind of subject is consistent with the instrumental, self-authoring subject implied in theories of reflexive modernisation. However, if detraditionalisation leads to more lifestyle options and the availability for more choices about how to lead one's life then does this mean that individuals become more reflexive and rational about choosing their goals and the means by which to bring them into fruition? On this point Giddens has received much criticism (Mestrovic, 1998; O'Brien et. al., 1999; Rose 1996a). His theory of the subject as the reflexive self-constituting individual is grounded in the Enlightenment tradition of constructing the modern world as ultimately knowable

and therefore manageable but theorising a cognitive and rational basis for subjectivity has been thoroughly attacked by both post humanist and feminist critiques. The central premise upon which feminist critiques of the liberal-humanist tradition are based is the assumption that subjectivity is the coherent and authentic source of meaning. This individual is fundamentally a unified and knowing subject with a fixed inner essence – rational consciousness. Feminist critiques of this construction have shown that theories of subjectivity within the liberal humanist tradition have been gender blind; therefore the Cartesian subject is not only a masculine construct but one which represents the historically privileged position occupied by men (Bordo, 1993:215-244; Flax, 1990; Weedon, 1997). Beneath the supposed neutrality and universality of the rational subject of western discourses lies a masculine identity. The feminine has been either an impossible representation; 'the sex which is not one', as argued by Irigaray, or as argued by Beauvoir, the feminine has been masculinity's 'Other', the term against which masculine identity has differentiated itself (Butler, 1990:11).

How might the construction of an autonomous, coherent, and self-authoring self be interpreted avoiding the problems of positing a cognitive basis of the self? Returning to the discussion in chapter two of Rose's assertion that 'selves are invented' requires that an analysis of the narratives told by these young women proceed from a different set of questions (Rose, 1998). When these narratives are read as being indicative of the late modern regime of the self what is it that they reveal about that regime? The content, form, and function of the narratives produced are consistent with Rose's argument that the contemporary self is constituted as 'coherent, bounded, individualised, intentional, the locus of thought, action and belief, the origin of its own actions, the beneficiary of a unique biography' (Rose, 1998:3). Rejecting a humanist theory of the subject means that interpreting this relation to the self involves locating the origins of this understanding not within the individual but within technologies of the self because the choices that these young women spoke about are embedded in multiple sets of

relations and practices[10]. It is this embeddedness that constitutes the conditions for a particular understanding of the self that Giddens does not fully address. Various authorities at work within specific sites become 'folded' into the self and produce a particular relation to the self. An interpretation of these young women's subjectification involves examining how it might be that they come to relate to themselves and others as subjects of certain types. The type of self invented in these narratives arises out of the operations of problematizations, technologies, and authorities which organise the practices within which young women's choices are embedded. These result is specific ideals of personhood which are linked into a wider social, moral and political context.

Problematizations

The problematization of conduct serves as a point of reference for the type of person one should be and as such it is central to shaping the relation to the self as being a certain type of person. Rose argues that it is in mundane practices where conduct becomes problematic to others and the self, therefore, notions of normality arise out of relation with that which is deemed undesirable and unacceptable. Within the narratives produced by these young women the problem of not being in control of one's life was a recurrent theme. For example, when Morgan talks about her decision to move back home to live with mother the basis for her decision is chosen in relation to a set of conditions in which she was 'going nowhere'. Similarly, the self narratives of Brenda and Jessica problematise the conduct of those who do not seek to achieve.

> Brenda: I'd want to do something to further my qualifications. A lot of my friends don't do anything. They just sit around every day and do nothing and I don't want to be like that. I want to have something. I want to have a

10 This approach draws heavily on Foucault's theorisation of specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves. Technologies of the self 'permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault, 1988:18).

nice house, nice car and things like that. *(Brenda, 19 years old inquiring about training programmes at the careers guidance centre).*

Jessica: I'm a waitress and a cook at Little Chef but it doesn't interest me. I couldn't do it full time. I do it full time for about 9 weeks of the summer and it's awful. It's too hot and you feel everyone is the whole place is looking down on you because the whole place is full of travelling business men and they treat you like you've got no brains and you're stupid. I couldn't do it. At the end of summer I'm so glad it's finished. I couldn't do it full time. Most of my friends didn't do a-levels. Most of my friends went straight into jobs at 16 so they've been working for 3 years and I'm still the only one who's been staying in doing homework but I'm glad though because my Dad always says to me, 'One day you'll be earning more than them', because they're coming home now with what I would working full time at Little Chef. So he says, persevere and you'll get there in the end. But it just feels like it's going on forever and I'm not even finished yet. *(Jessica, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

Technologies

Technologies refer to the means by which conduct is shaped in desired directions or as Rose states any 'hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, person, systems of judgement, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions about, and objectives for, human beings' (1996b:132)[11]. The choices of these young women are embedded within such technologies including media constructions of single mothers, state funded training programs, the family, schools, careers advice programs, youth skills programs, gender relations, age relations, 'race' relations, and various relations organised by ethnic traditions. All of these technologies entered into the narratives particularly in relation to the decisions regarding further education or training. When the young women spoke about having to decide which university they will attend or what kind of job they want to get, these choices are located within specific technologies that work to govern the conduct of conduct.

11 Rose notes that technologies can be of two types – disciplinary or pastoral. Disciplinary techniques in which authority seeks to normalise while pastoral techniques are based upon a relation of guidance between an authority and those whom they govern. Many of the sites in which young women are located contain both.

> Anna: The school doesn't exert pressure but they make it clear to you that you're going to have to fill in application forms and it gets quite confusing. I suppose I do have the summer to think about it but it is a worry always in the back of your mind - that you're going to have to make that decision. I might go and see the careers advisor or someone who is neutral and can give me their opinion of where it would be best to go. *(Anna, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

Authorities

A variety of authorities are implicated in the governance of young's women relation to the self. These include school teachers, youth care workers, social workers, mothers, fathers, and family members. As argued in chapter two authorities come to govern the self under construction through an 'enfolding' into the self. Katy, an eighteen year old Asian woman, for example, talks about the pressure she is feeling about what to do after A-levels where that pressure is partly constituted by the folding into the self of her mother's expectations about what Katy should be doing.

> Shelley: Do you think you'll experience any pressure when you decide after completing you're a-levels what to do next?
> Katy: Yeah from my Mum. She wants me to do a degree.
> Shelley: Does she feel pretty strongly about that?
> Katy: Yeah.
> Shelley: But you want the same thing?
> Katy: Yeah but I feel more pressure because of her. In the end it boils down to that picture on the wall with degree. She just wants to be in that picture.
> Shelley: How do you feel about that?
> Katy: It's hard. My sister found it hard too because she had to go through the same thing because she had my mums saying ' you've got to show them all you can do it' and I feel that's come to me now.
> Shelley: How do you think you'll deal with that pressure?
> Katy: I'm not sure yet. I think she's supportive of what I want to choose but I know that in her heart she wants me to do a degree so I'm going to try my hardest to achieve what I can. *(Katy, eighteen years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

A wide variety of authorities worked to inform the choices these young women talked about. The fact that most of them identified educational and career choices

as the most important decisions they were having to make in their lives is itself indicative of one of the ways in which their lives are governed by authorities. Sites such as schools, careers guidance centres, training programmes, work environments, youth outreach programmes and the family are assembled to meet the objective of organising the lives of young women in particular ways to produce specific outcomes. Technologies of the self and the forms of personhood they seek to inscribe are always heterogeneous producing fields through which we come to accord meaning to the self that are multiple and often incongruous[12].

Teleologies

Teleologies are the specific ideals or models of personhood which are deployed through specific practices and articulated in relation to particular problems and solutions concerning human conduct (Rose, 1996b:133). The dominant ideal in these narratives is the autonomous, self authoring self with an authentic interiority. However, the self is never unitary but simultaneously a point of convergence of multiple technologies with the implication that this ideal existed in a relation of tension with other ideals inscribed in other practices and relations in which these young women were located. This autonomous self came into conflict with other ideals such as motherhood because it was perceived that the demands of motherhood would be inconsistent with a self that would be independent. This same dynamic was evident in the narratives of some of the young women who had experienced an unwanted pregnancy where that event was seen as something that had to be immediately reconciled with their desire to remain autonomous. Another example is the conflict between the ideal of marrying young held for Asian women and their ideal of pursuing independence.

Strategies

12 This means that other constructions are possible in other sites. Constructions are spatially and temporally specific.

These problematizations, technologies, authorities, and teleologies are linked into a wider moral, social and political context. One of the consequences of developing a relation to the self as sovereign and free to choose is that individuals govern themselves as such subjects. As subjectivity is dependent upon the categories and meanings available within language we are neither the authors of the ways in which we understand ourselves nor are we unified, rational beings. However, in taking up a position provided by language the individual experiences their subjectivity as though it were under their control. The experience is of being the source, rather than the effect of language (Weedon, 1997:31). This is fundamentally a misrecognition because the sovereign self is an illusion.

Within such a relation the individual locates the self as the origin of actions, desires, and motivations all of which contribute to one's own success or failure. To achieve or, on the other hand, to fail, is accounted for by individual effort, drive, and commitment – not hierarchical social relations or unequal access to resources for instance. Practising the goal of self discipline assumes a central role in bringing about one's choices into being. Furthermore, the self is governed by an ethic of authenticity where constructing oneself as autonomous is to position oneself within a moral discourse. This was evident in discussions where strategies for dealing with future uncertainties were essentially constituted as being a matter of individual strength and conviction. The implication of this relation to the self is that both success and failure are individualised.

> Shelley: Are you worried about the future at all?
> Caroline: About not meeting what I want - not achieving what I want. Not getting the grades I want. And at university will I do well or...? I'll be living by myself and I worry about not being disciplined. *(Caroline, nineteen years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

Conclusion

The narratives constructed by the young women in relation to their understanding of their life trajectories reveal a particular relation to the self. That self is a sovereign, self authoring, independent person who is responsible for

making choices that retain a relation of 'being truthful to oneself'. Self identity, as revealed in these narratives was to a large degree about 'choosing a self' from a range of options on offer but the identities produced were not the product of a free floating, internally referential narrative. Here Giddens' assumptions about the subject are inadequate. Rather, it is useful to address the 'self as chosen' as a particular form of subjectification situated in practices that enjoin, inscribe, and incite a certain relation to oneself (Rose, 1998:181).

The choices that are made available and the ways in which those choices are experienced are always located within specific practices like schools, careers guidance centres, and training programs. These are contexts where relations based upon ascribed characteristics such as gender and ethnicity work to define the parameters of the trajectory that one 'ought' to be on. Furthermore, within those sites conduct is probematised in ways that constitute and reinforce an understanding of oneself as being a certain type of person. The construction of the self as free and independent is a particular relation to the self which came into conflict with technologies seeking to construct young women in a different way. For example the construction of young mothers as a burden to the system; the construction of women being best suited for secretarial work; or the idea that getting married and having children should be the priority for women all indicated the existence of other trajectories but these options were evaluated negatively in view of the relation to the self as autonomous. Regimes of subjectification work to give meaning to what we think we should be. We then become that kind of subject. Further conduct is oriented towards this understanding and also becomes the basis for rejecting authorities which seek to inscribe the self in different ways. The implication of understanding the self as having an interiority and a 'truth' means that choices can be negotiated on a moral basis. This negotiation has multiple implications. One of the positive effects of this relation to the self is that it allows young women to actively pursue their own goals and ideals, however, one of the negative effects is that is that uncertainty is individualised along with failure.

The relation to the self established in these narratives is historically contingent situated in the local specificity of the everyday where the autonomous self emerged as the dominant relation to the self[13]. The embeddedness that a 'regime of subjectification' implies challenges the autonomy of the self constituting subject who constructs an internally referential narrative. These ideas will be explored in the next chapter where the relation between the self and the body is examined. The aim will be to engage with some of the assumptions underlying the self constituting subject to understand how meanings regarding the self and body emerge. It will be argued that theories of reflexive modernisation offer a limited analysis of the mind and body relation because in this approach reflexivity privileges the mind over the body where the body, as an inscribed surface, is 'chosen' to match the self. Limitations of attempts to transcend a mind/body dualism will be discussed and it will be suggested that the problems underlying this approach are best addressed by returning to the notion of the subject as embedded in practices where the body is an event the meaning of which is not reducible to the realm of representation.

13 The possibility for alternate forms of subjecthood exists because of the heterogeneity and multiplicity of practices that constitute the social. There are a range of technologies at operation at any given time, however, in these interviews the autonomous self emerged as an expression of the dominant relation to the self. Other relations to the self may emerge in other contexts.

Chapter Four: Identity as an Embodied Event

> I always change my mind about how I want to look depending on what I'm wearing and that sort of thing. I wish I had three different bodies I could change into. Sometimes it gets you down. You get depressed about yourself but in general it's just something you have to live with and everyone's in the same boat. It's not that much of a major problem. *(Emilia, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

Emilia's explanation of the relationship between her sense of self and her body exhibits several features which may provide the basis for characterising her account as indicative of the way in which the body, in postmodernity, is increasingly lived as a 'project'. There is the suggestion of fluidity and indeterminacy; the centrality of image and style to the experience of the body; and the idea of different versions of the self corresponding to different bodies. However, this movement toward a 'postmodern' relation to the body is qualified by the admission that, in fact, the body cannot simply be altered or transformed to converge with particular versions of the self as is nor with the self that Emilia might like to be. This recognition of the limits of embodiment is accompanied by the experience of the body as unsatisfactory and in need of modification. This experience, however, is normalised and thereby rendered unproblematic. The nuances contained within this short excerpt illustrate the complex relationship between identity and embodiment which was readily apparent in the ways in which the young women in this study engaged with notions of the body and the self. These discussions raised questions about what bodies mean to those who live them; the origins of these meanings; the effects of these meanings; and how these meanings transform through practices.

The aim of this chapter is to locate this analysis first of all within the context of what Giddens argues is becoming the prevalent relation between bodies and selves – that is - the body as part of the reflexive project of the self. The limits of Giddens' approach will be considered placing particular emphasis on the mind/body dualism implicit in his ontological assumptions where the mind is privileged over a body which, by its denaturalisation in late modern conditions, he suggests becomes an object of choice. This problem of dualism which has been the focus of feminist critiques and approaches to embodied selves will then be explored

particularly feminist attempts to theorise the centrality of the mediating function of representation within the relation of self and body. This discussion is placed within the larger context of how it is that bodies acquire meaning. It will be argued that the body cannot be seen as a natural foundation or passive surface upon which meanings are inscribed by systems of signification but that there is an irreducibility between the subject and object such that in order to understand the ways in which young women actively live their embodied identities we need to develop an approach which can envision a body beyond representation – the body not as an object but as an event.

The Body as Project

The problem of constructing a relationship between the mind and body in which the mind is privileged underlies Giddens' theorisation of identities because of the central role reflexivity plays. The body is fundamental to Giddens' theory of structuration because the regularised control and reflexive monitoring of the body by the knowledgeable agent is a condition of action. This reflexive control of the body within predictable routines is intrinsic to the maintenance of ontological security (Giddens, 1984:66). Beyond this fundamental relationship between the reflexive monitoring of the body and action, however, Giddens suggests that the influences of late modernity accelerate reflexivity such that 'the body, like the self, becomes a site of interaction, appropriation and reappropriation, linking reflexively organised processes and systematically ordered expert knowledge' meaning that the body, once a given aspect of nature, becomes a project increasingly open to human intervention (Giddens, 1991:218). Through the development of technologies and techniques such as genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, plastic surgery, and health and diet regimes, bodies not only become objects for human management and reconfiguration but increasingly central to self identity. The blurring of the boundary between what is natural or given and that which is open to choice and reorganisation means that the self can be freed from bodily determination. The size, shape and appearance of the body become part of an expressive exterior of the self that is constantly monitored and managed (Shilling, 1993).

The body is increasingly pulled into the internally referential systems of

modernity and, therefore, both the development of bodies and selves occurs within a context where 'distant happenings' have a significant effect on the local (Giddens, 1991:4)[1]. The body, like other aspects of identity, becomes the responsibility of the individual who must cultivate and actively restructure the corporeal through the pursuit of specific body regimes chosen from a diverse range of lifestyle options made apparent in, for example, guidebooks and practical manuals which give advice on everything from health and exercise programmes to lovemaking techniques. The link made in Giddens' work between the self, the body and image has become a central feature of the 'consumer culture' said to be coterminous with late modernity where experiences of the self and the body are mediated by the constant projection by the mass media of a proliferation of lifestyle images and options to incorporate into ones' own project. From this perspective the concern with appearance and its cultivation are located as effects of consumer capitalism, a system in which one's consumption choices, for example, clothing, music, food and holiday destinations becomes the basis for identity rather than one's role in processes of production (Davis, 1995:49).

> Discipline and hedonism are no longer seen as incompatible, indeed the subjugation of the body through body maintenance routines is presented within consumer culture as a precondition for the achievement of an acceptable appearance and the release of the body's expressive capacity...within consumer culture, the inner and the outer body become conjoined: the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body become the enhancement and appearance of the outer body (Featherstone, 1991: 171).

Critique: Minds Without Bodies?

Giddens' analysis of the body/self relationship is open to three main criticisms: the reproduction of the mind/body binary; his privileging of mind over body; and his gender blindness. The starting point for Giddens' version of late modernity is a set of conditions which accentuate individual reflexive capacities. This reflexivity extends to what was once interpreted as given therefore both nature and the body are increasingly colonised and subject to revision. As Shilling and

[1] For a discussion of the role of the media and the expansion of mediated experience in postmodernity see Smart (1992: 113-139) and Bauman (1992:31-3, 149-155).

Mellor point out this argument is grounded upon a mind/body dualism which poses limits on understanding 'how people's experiences of, and responses to, social structures are shaped by their *sensory* and *sensual* selves' (1996:2).

> People comprise both minds and bodies in Giddens' analysis of modernity, but are *essentially* minds for most of their lives and tend only to be shaped by their sensual responses when there is a breakdown in their reflexive attempts to understand or engage with the world (Shilling and Mellor, 1996:2).

By effectively placing the body 'outside' the actor, the actor becomes fundamentally a thinking and choosing agent and not a feeling and being agent (Turner, 1992:87). By emphasising processes of reflexivity, to such a large extent, Giddens offers up a view of the social actor which has much in common with the tradition of 'rationalist sociology' dominated by the Enlightenment belief that the mind takes precedence over the body – an origin that leads to a view of the social actor as disembodied (Shilling and Mellor, 1996:4). Through a rational and reflexive engagement with the choices and options on offer the body becomes the material upon which the mind acts. It is the mind via reflexivity which creates self identity with the body then reworked to conform with this reflexively ordered narrative. The individual is a reflexive self not an embodied self – a disembodied consciousness (Turner, 1992). Privileging of the mind not only reproduces the Cartesian binary of mind/body but fails to address the irreducible and mutually constituting nature of the terms.

The reproduction of a Cartesian approach to the mind/body relationship is particularly problematic for feminism. Indeed a critique of this binary has been central to a feminist problematization of Western knowledge production because of the way in which the mind, as the realm associated with the masculine, has been privileged over the body – the devalued term and the realm associated with the feminine (Barrett, 1992; Bordo, 1986; Butler, 1990; Flax, 1992; Hekman, 1990, Nicholson, 1990)[2]. Theories such as Giddens' risk reproducing the disembedded

[2] Many feminist epistemologies challenge the norms of reason and objectivity by asserting the centrality of the role the body performs in the production and evaluation of knowledge. See Bordo (1986) and Grosz (1993). Haraway (1988:589) makes a similar point about the impossibility of knowledge production from a position of objectivity in arguing for a

and disembodied subject of masculine thought with its universalising assumptions of objectivity and rationality. It is this system of binaries which has served to negate the feminine and locate women outside the realm of the subject. As a consequence the feminine (and the female body) has historically been represented as that which must be defined, directed and controlled through the application of disembodied, objective, masculine knowledge.

> ...the constant element throughout historical variation is the *construction* of the body as something apart from the true self (whether conceived as soul, mind, spirit, will, creativity, freedom...) and as undermining the best efforts of that self. That which is not-body is the highest, the best, the noblest, the closest to God; that which is body is the albatross, the heavy drag on self realisation...*the body* is the negative term, and if woman *is* body, then women *are* that negativity, whatever it may be: distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death (Bordo, 1993:5, emphasis original).

Giddens does not acknowledge that the mind/body relation is inextricably gendered and that positing opportunities for freeing the body from the constraints of modernity has gendered implications. Nor does he address the specificity of the relationship between the body and the feminine while seeming to assume that bodies of late modernity are ungendered. Indeed, women, who have always been more embodied than men have long been aware of the form and appearance of their bodies and the extent to which they are responsible for creating that surface in accordance with cultural ideals and images 'whose content is far from arbitrary, but is instead suffused with the dominance of gendered, racial, class, and other cultural iconography' (Bordo, 1993:250). As McNay argues theories of reflexivity overemphasise the expressive possibilities created by processes of detraditionalisation by failing to examine how questions relating to gender, embodiment and sexuality reveal aspects of identity that may be less amenable to emancipatory reconstructions (1999:98). By failing to fully consider corporeality the transformation of self identity for Giddens - who relies upon a cognitive basis for self - becomes primarily a matter of symbolic identification while a

---

'politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition for being heard to make rational knowledge claims'. This argument relies upon 'the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity' (ibid.).

consideration of its mediation in embodied practices is undertheorised (McNay, 1999). In order to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between the self and the body it is important to establish how bodies come to acquire meaning in the social world.

What Do Bodies Mean?

The dominant sociological approach to understanding the meaning of bodies starts from a point of view of the body as representation or as the textual effect of discourse. The origins of the meaning of body are to be found beyond the biological in the realm of the social. There are three variants of the constructionist position. In a Foucauldian influenced variant the body is conceived as an object of control and scrutiny, governed through relations of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977, 1979). In the second approach, characteristic of Bourdieu's work, the body becomes a medium through which meanings are transmitted and social categories are reproduced (Bourdieu, 1984). In the third approach, influenced by semiotics, physical existence is overruled by the primacy of discourse and language (Barthes, 1972). The body becomes purely a surface which reflects the social[3]. Many feminist critiques of the processes by which women's bodies acquire their meaning share the assumptions of one or more of the above positions. Constructionist approaches have been valuable because they undermine the taken for granted 'naturalness' of the body – a natural body which has served as a justification for 'natural' difference between the sexes and, thereby, naturalising a system of structured gender inequality.

Feminist analyses have sought to explain how hierarchically organised dualisms such as mind/body, subject/object, reason/emotion, and culture nature contribute to the systematic organisation of meanings of gendered difference because they are mapped onto social relations working therefore to structure the social world (Butler, 1990; Elam, 1994; Scott, 1988; Weedon, 1997). Deconstructing these binaries leads to an understanding of how representations work to naturalise that which is in fact socially constructed and deeply political.

[3] For a discussion of constructionist theories see Radley (1995).

This critical perspective has been applied to Western representations of the female body to show that the body that we experience and conceptualise is always mediated by constructs, associations, and images which work to enjoin a particular relation between the self and the body. The impact of the cultural upon the material is such that for 'women, associated with the body and largely confined to a life centred *on* the body (both the beautification of one's own body and the reproduction, care, and maintenance of the bodies of others), culture's grip on the body is a constant, intimate fact of everyday life' (Bordo, 1993:17).

The body, therefore, is interpreted from this perspective as a medium through which oppressive cultural norms of femininity are expressed but it is not simply that women's subjectivities and bodies are passive objects. It has been a significant development that feminist accounts of the relationship between women and their bodies have moved beyond critiquing the beauty system as an effect of gendered power relations where women are cast as victims of male oppression[4]. More sophisticated approaches have effectively drawn upon the assumptions of social constructionism to show how representations work to constitute bodies but not without the active production of the body by the subject thus bringing agency into the frame[5]. Images and constructions of 'beauty' perform a normalising function by providing a model for women to measure themselves against but these idealised images and definitions of femininity remain for the most part outside of the ways women's bodies actually are so the body becomes defined as that which is insufficient, deficient and requiring of constant management and surveillance[6]. Through a pursuit of continually shifting ideals 'female bodies become docile bodies...whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, "improvement"' via the 'exacting and normalising disciplines of diet, makeup, and dress' (Bordo, 1993:166). In this analysis the focus shifts away from women as passive victims to the ways in which women come to discipline and survey their own bodies, engaging in practices which produce their own bodies

[4] For feminist critiques of beauty practices as part of a system of domination through which women are oppressed see Bovey (1991); Brownmiller (1985); Chapkis (1986); and Wolfe (1991).

[5] Dorothy Smith (1990) makes the argument that women actively produce their bodies in relation to textual constructions. As such 'femininity' is a practice of everyday life.

[6] For a discussion of how normal bodies become perceived as abnormal in relation to

according to the dictates of multiple discourses in play. In emphasising the role of intersecting cultural discourses the body is presented as a text upon which dominant and coercive meanings are inscribed. Women are not cast as passive objects but as active producers in their bodily appearance[7]. This point will be taken up later in the chapter in relation to the practice of cosmetic surgery and women's agency. While choice enters into this relation between the subject and the body, this 'choice' is circumscribed by ideals of femininity and, therefore, lies outside of 'choice' in the usage suggested by Giddens.

Constructionist approaches emphasise that women generally live this type of mediated relation to their bodies with the effect of a constant sense of the body as in need of improvement. The young women in this study were confronted with the question of whether or not they ever felt pressure to change an aspect of themselves. One of the most frequent responses to this question involved the issue of bodily appearance. This concern with the body was also evident in discussions about what they would change about themselves and their lives if they could[8]. Their desires to transform an aspect of their body revealed a deep awareness of their own embodiment and the ways in which the body was defined as a problematic part of the self.

> Shelley: Do you ever feel pressure to change aspects of yourself?
>
> Brenda: Pressure to lose weight. That's what I really need to do because before I had the baby I was only 8 and a half stone and now I've gone to eleven stone. I feel pressure by people being able to walk around with skimpy tops on and little trousers and I can't do that like I'd like to do it.

---

images of bodies see Wendell (1996).

[7] Gatens (1992) discusses the relationships between power, bodies, and difference where power operates to constitute bodies. These ideas are explored in relation to the ways in which feminism has engaged with these issues from the 1970s through to deconstructionist approaches.

[8] In the interviews conducted at the careers guidance centre any question that made explicit reference to the body was not asked as the manager of the centre felt these questions were inappropriate for the setting. At first it seemed that this condition would prevent the issue of body image from being addressed, however, in responses to more general questions about social pressure and self dissatisfaction six of the nine young women interviewed mentioned that they often felt dissatisfied with their an aspect of their physical appearance. This indicates the extent to which the body was experienced as an integral part of self identity.

> That's the only pressure really because of role models and what they look like. *(Brenda, 19 years old, Careers Guidance).*

> Georgia: Everything. Really badly so. I'm really insecure about everything. Everyone, like my Mom, my Dad, my boyfriend - they always say, 'why don't you believe in yourself?'. I'm really paranoid so much about my weight. I know I'm not fat when I see other people who are but I know I've got lumps and bumps that I'd rather weren't there. *(Georgia, 18 years old, Pearson College GNVQ in Health and Social Care).*

The young women were asked to identify the sources of this problematization of the body and to account for why they thought the way they did about their body. Social pressures from peers, parents and society in general played a part in their experience but the predominant force which they felt undermined their confidence and ability to feel good about themselves was the media and the ways in which these representations organised their own, as well as, other's ideas about how their bodies should look. Their bodies are problematised through the normative effects of the discursive constructions of femininity.

> Lianne: It's just about the way you look like when you look in magazines. It really annoys me actually when there's all these thin people and if lads are watching a film because I've got loads of boy mates and...it's like 'Oh look at her. She's got a really nice body!' It just makes me think 'Well they're not saying that about me because I don't look like that'. I'm not saying that I'm fat and stuff but I don't know it's just the way you're expected to look in their eyes. *(Lianne, 16 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

> Mel: There's lots of pressure from magazines. Everybody reads magazines which might say something and it comes across as the best way to do things and a lot of magazines when they have clothes and all these different fashions you think to yourself 'If only I could own that'. There's a kind of pressure there to keep up with the fashions or to be the ideal person. You're meant to be really skinny and there's a lot of pressure for teenagers to look like supermodels. *(Mel, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

The kind of dissatisfaction with the body expressed by these young women and their identification of the media as one of the main causes for feeling that their bodies are deficient corresponds with the assumptions underlying feminist analyses that rely upon the notion of the body as text. However, the problem with constructionist analyses is the potential for the body, as a process, to be rendered completely docile – made subservient to the all encompassing effects of discourse.

By privileging discourse the material body disappears behind layers of representation and becomes only that which can be 'spoken or readily put into words' rather than a lived body (Radley, 1995:7). One consequence is that 'the body tends to become an inert mass controlled by discourses centred on the mind (which is treated as if abstracted from an active human body). This ignores the idea of disciplinary systems of power as "lived practices" which do not simply mark themselves on people's thoughts, but permeate, shape and seek to control their sensuous and sensory experiences' (Shilling, 1997:79). Bodies cannot simply be treated as though they the are the 'natural' foundation upon which culture overlays a disciplinary system of meanings. Their existence is not purely as a prior surface or blank page passively awaiting culture's inscription.

> These strands of social constructionism capture the body only insofar as they show how its functions, its movements, its 'inner' and 'outer' workings, have been shaped by social structures and discourse. From the latter perspective, the sign (text) separates itself from the spectacle which it represents, objectifying and separating out the body as 'not-mind'. The de-realisation of the body-subject through representation leaves it (as flesh) marginalised. The consequence of this situation is that, within discourse, the lived body is rendered knowable only through the constructions that are its multiple realities, but its existence as a lived entity is effectively denied (Radley, 1995:7).

Feminist critiques of representational practices and conventions have been effective for theorising the relation between female identity and embodiment and, in particular, how normalising meanings of the female body operate, but such endeavours have not escaped distinct dilemmas presented by mind/body dualism. While some feminist strategies emphasise the corporeal origins of femininity[9] (Braidotti, 1991, 1994; Irigaray, 1985) others focus on the discursive[10] (Butler, 1993) but both critiques of representation are haunted to some extent by the maintenance of the mind/body dualism because representation is conceived as a negation of corporeality[11]. Feminist critiques of representation are often founded

[9] In this argument sexual difference is treated as ontological and constitutive of the subject. For a discussion of corporeal feminism and its critique of representation see Bray and Colebrook, (1998).

[10] Here bodies are theorised as effects of signification. For instance in Butler (1993) it is argued that materiality cannot be located as an exterior to representation or as a pure outside to discourse, therefore, sex is an effect of gender.

[11] This argument is developed effectively in Bray and Colebrook (1998) from which the

on the assumption that images are not just mere representations but work to constitute the feminine in narrow and constrictive terms. Eating disorders are often cited as an extreme effect of this constitution, however, at a more general level the dominant relation of women to their bodies is often construed as disordered because of the disciplinary effects of representation[12]. In such an analysis women are cast as the victims of representation 'trapped in embodiment through stereotypical and alienating images' (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:35). Thus the need to theorise how the realm of signification works to construct the feminine.

In one approach to this problem the realm of representation is critiqued as being organised entirely by phallocentric logic therefore the female body (and subjectivity) is distorted, objectified and silenced by a repressive and monolithic realm of representation governed by the masculine (Braidotti, 1991, 1994; Irigaray, 1985). Cultural meanings and the realm of representation are based on a notion of lack because the originary maternal/pre-oedipal/preconscious is negated in order to produce a relation of difference around which identity is organised. The problem of phallologocentrism suggests corporeality, materiality and sexual difference are radically anterior to thought, that women can only ever be outside of representation, and that within current representational practices women's bodies can only be negated. Women will, therefore, remain trapped by distorted images until a more gynocentric form of representation is developed allowing women to see themselves as autonomous subjects (Bray and Colebrook, 1998). The solution, which is not without its own set of problems, seems to reside in a prerepresentational or authentic female body that evades the negation of phallocentric signification.

One of the ways this approach remains unsatisfactory is that it tends to reinforce the mind/body dualism of Cartesian thought because women are explicitly, even authentically positioned as *bodies.* While men are explicitly located within the realm of thought, language, signification, logic and so forth, female bodies are posed as representation's transgressive Other. Ultimately to

---

following analysis substantially draws upon.

[12] For feminist critiques of representation eating disorders are of central importance because they implicitly demonstrate a negation or repression of the body 'according to a limited, reified, or dominant body image' (Bray and Colebrook, 1993:41). For studies of eating disorders see Bruch (1979); Chernin (1983); MacSween (1993); and Orbach (1986).

pursue this strategy requires feminism to produce or retrieve this prerepresentational body in an illusory search for an uncontaminated origin. Additionally, if female bodies are beyond representation then any strategy which adopts this view will preclude examination of the specific practical, historical techniques that regulate bodies. Furthermore, 'as long as corporeality, materiality and authentic sexual difference are understood as radically anterior to thought, or negated by representation, feminist critique will only be a reaction against dualism' (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:38).

Another approach to the problem of representation and the body has been to explore and demystify the ways in which practices of signification claim to *represent* bodies that in actuality these very practices work to constitute. This argument is exemplified in Butler's work where a challenge is made against the distinction between materiality and discourse (Butler, 1993). Here, the irreducibility of sexual difference (i.e. materiality) posited in the above approach is refigured as that which is a necessary condition for the very construction of materiality (Butler, 1993:28). It is through the very distinction or exclusion of materiality from linguistic construction that is the condition for its construction. Sexual difference (the material body) is an effects of signification made to appear through language. The ontological status given to the body, therefore, is a constitutive effect of power and not a primary given (1993:35). Intelligibility or that which can be spoken requires a constitutive outside, an exclusion. In this analysis phallogocentric economies can only function by what they excluded, in this case, materiality.

This perspective denies the existence of an authentic female body undistorted by patriarchy. Rather, the body as nature or culture's outside is in fact thoroughly located in discourse. For instance in Butler's work sex, once the domain of nature and the site for the social construction of sexual difference (gender), is reconfigured as an *effect* of culture. Materiality, exteriority and a prediscursive body are not denied but are constituted as effects of discourse. While Butler does not posit an authentic, originary body that is negated by phallocentric representations she still relies upon the idea of the body being a 'constitutive outside'. All systems of signification, she maintains, are not self contained or self

sufficient but effect an exteriority which they purport to represent. A primary advantage of this argument is that it circumvents the dilemmas produced for feminism by treating the body as a pure fact of nature – a course that too easily leads to biological determinism or essentialism. Butler's work, although able to offer valuable insights into the workings of signification and materiality, can be criticised for still retaining a dualism of discourse and matter where matter is posited as radically anterior. Even though a prediscursive materiality is held by Butler to be possible only through its status as a constitutive exclusion and thoroughly an effect of discourse representation would always remain, within her argument in some sense, as a negation of matter – a break with a prior materiality, even where that materiality is an effect of representation (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:44). The terms of Butler's argument still rely upon a binary relation between representation and materiality. Corporeality becomes a constitutive condition not an ontological basis for the production of meanings but as something other than discursive, an outside upon which the production of meaning depends. Thus a distinction is drawn between the discursive and the constitutive outside producing a duality between signification and matter. The body remains inescapably representational even as an 'outside' to representation. In this formulation it is still other than discursive – as that which is necessary for discursive economies to function. Representation is only made possible through a relation to some nondiscursive exterior.

In summary both of the strategies discussed above interpret representation as a negation where meaning is made possible through that which is outside – thereby relying on a binary relation. The drawback remains of using an approach which retains a mind/body dualism and the construction of a model of the agent as essentially a mind that happens to occupy a body posing limits, therefore, to understanding how identity is produced through sensuous experience. To privilege the mind suggests that meaning originates solely within the realm of representation and then is mapped onto the body by the mind while insufficient attention is given to meanings that originate through the experiences of embodiment. The disembodied subject is particularly problematic for feminist analyses but even sophisticated approaches to this problem have not fully escaped the limits of dualism whether by posing signification as the producer of bodies or conversely by

arguing that the body produces modes of signification. Finally one of the most serious limitations of privileging the realm of representation as the origin of corporeal meanings is that the underlying assumptions dissolve the active role of the agent in generating the meanings attached to their own embodied identity. In many feminist arguments phallocentric representations *cause* women's self-image particularly those generated in the mass media and advertising. But ultimately this pathologises women's reading practices by suggesting a simplistic ingestion of imagery and a resultant incorporation of these meanings into the self and onto the surface of the body[13] (Bray and Colebrook, 1998). In short, women's agency is left undertheorised.

The problem remains of how to undertake an analysis of female embodiment and subjectivity that can transcend a mind/body dualism present in either theorising the body as a projection of the mind or the body as an object which determines a way of thinking. Exploring the relation between embodiment and subjectivity, for feminism, is an important point of entry into moving beyond a Cartesian logic which privileges the mind and the self as the origin of meaning because:

> ...as the point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological, the body is a dynamic, mutable frontier. The body is the threshold through which the subject's lived experience of the world is incorporated and realised and, as such, is neither pure object nor pure subject. It is neither pure object since it is the place of one's engagement with the world. Nor is it pure subject in that there is always a material residue that resists incorporation into dominant symbolic schema' (McNay:1999:98).

McNay's point suggests an irreducibility between mind and body, subject and object, culture and nature and so forth. An analytical approach that can incorporate this point would be one which questions the idea of the body as an effect of image consumption, proposing instead the body as constituted by more than the capacity to be a sign or image via the internalisation of distorted media representations. In

[13] See Probyn's (1987) analysis of anorexia. She makes the important point that the subject of anorexia is located at the intersection of multiple and intersecting discourses, thus, her argument challenges reductionist analyses of the relationship between eating disorders and representations.

short, it is more than a semiotic problem. Rather it is a site of practices, comportments, and contested articulations (Bray and Colebrook, 1998).

> The body is not a prior fullness, anteriority, or plenitude that is subsequently identified and organised through restricting representations. Representations are not negations imposed on otherwise fluid bodies. Body images are not stereotypes that produce human beings as complicit subjects. On the contrary, images, representations, and significations (as well as bodies) are aspects of ongoing practices of negotiation, reformation, and encounter. Neither the body nor the feminine can be located as the innocent other of (patriarchal) representation (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:38-39).

What is required then is a way to think about the body beyond terms of representation. The terms of the binary must be problematised by 'regarding the body as the threshold or borderline concept that hovers perilously and undecidably at the pivotal point of binary pairs' (Grosz, 1994:23). This strategy will be further explored in relation to how transformation in the meaning of embodiment can be effected through an engagement in processes and practices in which both the subject and object are implicated.

Resistance and Agency – Or The Text is Not Real

The rendering of women as complicit subjects and docile bodies written by the texts of fashion magazines or glossy advertisements is one of the most problematic tendencies underlying some feminist critiques of women's participation in body and beauty regimes. This is problematic because the casting of women as cultural dopes precludes reaching an understanding of women as skilled and knowledgeable agents who have an active and lived relationship to their bodies (Smith, 1990; Young 1990). In this study the relationship between self-identity and body transcended the meanings inscribed on the surface of the body. Whilst cultural representations of women's bodies may work towards discursively constructing bodies in particular ways such texts were encountered by the young women interviewed in a ways that suggested that they engage with these images and their own bodies in critical and knowing ways. Media projections of images of thin, fashionable and glamorous women were often cited as contributing to the dissatisfaction they felt with their own bodies but most of the young women were

able to negotiate these discursive constructions and their effects in a such a way that allowed for strategies of resistance lending support to the suggestion that the relationship between self and body is about a process more complex than that which involves the inscription of the text upon the surface of the body.

> Shelley: So the main pressure you feel is from magazines?
> Lynne: Yeah magazines definitely because it's all too easy to look at a magazine and think how happy people's lives are then you look at your life and think you're not that happy. Or you think about how those people look and how they've got this extensive wardrobe and go on nice holidays.
> Shelley: When you see that do you think your life should be more like that?
> Lynne: Yeah until I start thinking about it then I think 'Oh hold on a minute' because I've done psychology so I also think into things more. I think it's definitely a massive influence on people – the media.
> Shelley: How do you resist that pressure?
> Lynne: Basically I just get a grip on reality because there's no way you're going to be as happy as these people in the magazines with beautiful figures and nice clothes and loads of money. For happiness you need to look at your own self-concept and the people that are around you. *(Lynne, 18 years old, Pearson College, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care).*

> Sarah: There's always like skinny people walking around and well dressed people which the media has taken too far because people aren't like that in real life. There's no point in changing to be like them because nobody is like them apart from in the media. It's not really reality.
> Shelley: Do you do anything to resist that pressure?
> Sarah: Like with programs like Baywatch. I just don't watch them. They don't interest me. There's no point. I used to read magazines when I was younger but now I don't have time to read them anymore. There's no point. *(Sarah, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

These kinds of engagement with the media are a significant part of self identity because as Giddens, among others have argued, in late modernity construction of the self occurs within a context whereby experiences are increasingly mediated by temporally/spatially distant influences. It is also a context in which young women engage with those influences, their own embodiment and their positionings within systems of signification in a resistant fashion. In the following example, Lianne is able to recount the experience of being positioned in relation to the slender ideal of female embodiment and how it feels to take up that position. The effect of this positioning is normative such that she feels she ought to take responsibility for transforming her body in relation to idealised constructions of femininity but then having self consciously performed this mental operation she

subverts a straight forward cause and effect relationship between the text and her body by returning to the unproblematic relationship she had established between her body and her self prior to encountering the text.

> Lianne: Sometimes I think I've got to lose weight then I think 'No' because I'd be doing if for someone else and not for me because I don't really want to and I'm happy with myself anyway. *(Lianne, 16 years old, Careers guidance centre).*

One other strategy developed by these young women in dealing with the pressure to make their bodies conform to images of ideal femininity was to normalise a pathological relationship to their bodies. While many of them admitted to wanting to change their bodies if they could the discomfort produced by their desire for what they did not have was deflated by placing all women within this position. Indeed having a problem with the way one looks was interpreted as quite a normal relationship thereby lessening the impact of the disciplining and normalising function of media imagery. Rather than feeling as though one's body was abnormal and in need of transformation it was *that very feeling* which was normalised. Through this manoeuvre their accounts of what actually constituted normality undermined what cultural influences dictated as 'normal' thereby counteracting the disciplinary capacity of these representations.

> Brenda: People on TV like Baywatch, they can run around in little skimpy leotards and normal people can't do that (laughs). And lots of things are like that really. Like how the Spice Girls do things and we can't actually do them sort of things. *(Brenda, 19 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

> Emilia: You get depressed about yourself but in general it's just something you have to live with and everyone's in the same boat. It's not that much of a major problem. *(Emilia, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

> Lauren: There's social pressures that you obviously get as a girl. You know you've got Kate Moss and people like that. There's just that normal type of pressure that you get growing up as a young woman – feeling like you should be 3 stone lighter and things like that. *(Lauren, 19 years old, Careers Guidance centre).*

> Sarah: If someone said I could change my body I'd probably want to be

> taller and slimmer and have a prettier face but that's just what everyone would say. *(Sarah, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

All of these comments subvert the normalising and homogenising effects of the media. Even though a desire to transform the body is expressed by these young women this desire does not then translate into a need to actually undertake action to adapt or discipline the body accordingly. The body may be part of a project of the self but it is never simply a passive surface for inscription. Furthermore, the body is not merely an object which becomes the focus of a lifestyle project but a site of resistance. What these comments suggest is that representations of idealised femininity work at the level of appearance or surface yet do not effect a self that can engage with the body and these representations as a site of resistance. Therefore, consideration must be given to what embodied agency means. If bodies, as Giddens (1991) argues, are becoming less of a given by nature and more the product of choice then what does a chosen intervention into the physical mean? One of the ways to explore this question is through an analysis of cosmetic surgery as the epitome of human intervention into the materiality of the self.

Plastic Bodies and Authentic Selves

Cosmetic surgery is often cited as the exemplar of body project practices and in the postmodern world as a practice whose prevalence is on the increase (Bordo, 1993; Shilling, 1993). What does the increased popularity and acceptance of this technology reveal about the ways in which women live their bodies? What issues are raised for women's embodied agency and these disciplinary practices?[14] In her analysis of women who undergo cosmetic surgery Davis emphasises that women's agency must be central to any account of the relationship between identity and the decision to alter one's body . To treat women as cultural dopes would mean

[14] The relationship between technologies and body transformation has become an growing object of study for the social sciences often throwing into question the distinction between subject and object. For discussions of the implementation of technologies for the modification of bodies and the implications of these practices see Balsamo (1995); Featherstone and Burrows (1995); and Wendell (1996).

that 'cosmetic surgery becomes a strangely disembodied phenomenon, devoid of women's experiences, feelings, and practical activities with regard to their bodies' (Davis, 1995:57). Any argument that treats women who have their bodies surgically altered as compliant to a system that serves men's' interests and reproduces the conditions of their own oppression, relies upon a faulty conception of agency – that is the suggestion that women could not possibly make an active and knowledgeable choice. This recognition of agency is central to understanding why women engage in bodily practices and routines, as well as, understanding the complexity of the relation of self and body. For example Davis makes the point that many feminist perspectives deny the role that moral contradictions play in women's decisions to alter their bodies. These decisions involve a series of justifications that are neither easily reconciled with each other nor with other beliefs and values held. This ambivalence, in her study, was central to women's decision making processes. By making these arguments Davis problematises tendencies within feminist theorisation of women's relation to their bodies[15]. These practices, Davis concludes are not about women wanting to become physically beautiful but about women renegotiating their relationship to their bodies and, through the body, the world around them. In short it is about embodied subjectivity where the body is situated in culture rather than determined by it (Davis, 1995:169).

> Feminist intervention in cosmetic surgery becomes restricted, on the one hand, to the moralistic strategy of propagating self-acceptance in the hope that women will see the error of their ways or, on the other, to waiting until some miraculous shifting in the discursive constellations enables this particularly nasty cultural phenomenon to make way for other – less oppressive, it is hoped – cultural practices (Davis, 1995:58).

Davis' study is important because she attempts to understand, rather than condemn, women who participate in such a painful, extreme and potentially dangerous practice in order to change the way their bodies look. Part of the uniqueness of her work relies on her attempt to reconcile her desire to understand the relationship between women's bodies and their identities with the her own

[15] Davis draws on the work of Bartky (1990); Smith (1990); and Young (1990) to construct a theory of female agency in relation to the practices of cosmetic surgery. This approach avoids reducing women's actions to the effects of male oppression or phallocentric discourses.

identification with the predominantly negative evaluation of cosmetic surgery characteristic of feminist critiques of the beauty system. This reconciliation is central to elaborating an understanding of the meaning of cosmetic surgery beyond its operation as a site of discipline but as a practice enacted upon the body through which the self is effected. Her study provides insight into how women live their bodies and the relationship between subjectivity and the material body. Her conclusions suggest that these two aspects of the self are irreducibly linked such that bodies are never just objects but part of a process of negotiating and renegotiating self identity.

The complexity of the relationship between self and body was explored with the young women in this study by asking them to respond to a scenario in which a decision to undergo cosmetic surgery was being negotiated. They were asked what advice they would give in order to resolve the dilemma[16]. Responses were equally split between those who advocated surgery, those who advised against it and those who were ambivalent that is those whose answers (whether approving or disapproving) were reached only after a lengthy, and often contradictory process of analysing the complex set of considerations implicit in the scenario. The following response stands out because it was one of the few that so outwardly condemned the practice by embedding it within a larger social context.

> Anna: Well I see why people do it but I think what's sad and what needs surgically removing is the fact that they have to do it in the first place. The fact that society is so driven by the way that people look and behaving towards people because of the way that they look that they feel the need, in order to feel good about themselves to change the way they look...It's just a way of avoiding the bigger issue of how society treats people in the first place. *(Anna, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

While Anna reconstitutes the scenario as a dilemma whose solution is rooted in the

[16] The scenario presented was: Anne has always been self conscious about the size and shape of her nose. Her best friend says that she should just try to feel good about herself rather than focusing on what she doesn't like about herself. Recently, Anne's Aunt gave her some money to put towards visiting her cousins in Australia. She is really excited about having the opportunity to travel but she recently has considered using the money for cosmetic surgery instead so that she can finally feel more self confident and better about herself. She thinks that a trip will only last for 1 month but a nose job is forever. On the other hand she is disappointed in herself for wanting to have the surgery. What should be

transformation of societal values most of the young women interviewed constructed the dilemma as being inherently about constructing an identity. Here the emphasis was not placed on society and dominant ideals but on individualised intentions, needs, and desires. For example cosmetic surgery was evaluated in terms of whether it could boost one's confidence and, significantly, this confidence was perceived as something that resides beyond and, therefore, escapes the surface of the body.

> Mel: I don't think I could do it myself...but I think a lot of people now seem to be doing it so people think oh I could do with this changing or that changing and really they're just changing their outside appearance and when they've had it done I think in the long run they won't feel the confidence inside. It'll still be lacking. *(Mel, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

> Shelley: Do you think if you feel that there is a part of the way you look that is affecting your confidence that changing that body part will help you feel more confident?
> Alice: Probably would do for awhile but then you'd find something else that you want to change and it would be never ending. And you'd think I won't look good until I get this done and it would just go on forever. *(Alice, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

These responses suggest that there is a more complex relationship between the self and the body than the surface of the body being simply reducible to the self or vice versa. That is – changing the surface appearance of the body does not correspond to a transformation of the self in and of itself. Such as position draws into question Giddens' suggestion that the body is increasingly a 'project' that is made and remade according the definition of the narrative of self that is under construction. In some instances the negotiation of the dilemma about whether cosmetic surgery was an appropriate way to reconcile bodily appearance with self identity undermines the assumptions of individualisation, that is, the notion that the appearance of the body is increasingly the responsibility of the individual. For the young women interviewed, confidence was a central value that guided their narratives and yet when applied to the body the suggestion that the surface of the body could be so readily altered to fit with a narrative about confidence was not so straightforward. Changing the appearance of the body would not necessarily

---

do?

change the self that lay underneath.

> Claire: I'd tell her that it doesn't matter what you look like. It shouldn't matter to anyone what you look like. It's what's underneath that counts. Who you are inside. I mean I don't like myself. I look in the mirror and think 'Oh god I better not go out or someone will mistake me for a whale' but I'm not bothered about what people say. They can say what they what but it'll go in one ear and out the other because it doesn't matter to me what other people say. What matters to me is what I think about myself. And that's what she should do. *(Claire, 16 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

The irreducibility of the self and body was in part to about authenticity. Neither the self nor the body can be chosen because they are lived as though they are already there, prior to the narrative being constructed. Altering the body would violate the self that exists as it is, therefore, the predicament is interpreted as one in which the body and self must be accepted as they are because they are not amenable to intervention. This dimension of the responses to the scenario challenges the suggestion that in postmodernity the self is experienced or understood as fluid. Rather, as was evident in chapter three the relation that is enjoined to the self is one in which an autonomous and authentic interiority is posited. The following examples draw on notions of authenticity as a guide to resolving the dilemma.

> Lianne: I think everyone can learn to live with something they don't like because everyone has a flaw. But having surgery, that's just being thick. ***Having a nose that's not you.*** It's just part of her and she's got to learn to live with it. *(Lianne, 16 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

> Lucy: I don't think it's...well it's not that it isn't right but I don't think it's something I would do. ***This is my face.*** *(Lucy, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

> Nicola: I don't think that she should have the surgery because ***this is the way she was made*** and she's got to learn to get confidence in herself otherwise no one will have confidence in her. *(Nicola, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

> Sarah: People should just realise ***that you are what you are*** kind of thing. There's no point trying to change it because it might not fit with what you are. It won't help. Just because her nose looks better or whatever it won't mean her life is going to change. *(Sarah, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

Experiential Processes vs. Textual Surfaces

The suggestion that embodied selves exceed the surface and are not reducible to signification is also apparent in instances where the solution to the cosmetic surgery dilemma was resolved by the conclusion that the surgery should be chosen. Yet again in these cases altering the body was about more that a modification of surface appearance. Instead, it was suggested that undergoing cosmetic surgery was about transforming the way in which the body was lived – not how it looked. In most cases the underlying concern was about confidence and how changing one's body would allow the self to enter into situations with an increased sense of efficacy. In many cases a pronounced sense of ambivalence was expressed but in the end it was held that if cosmetic surgery allowed the young woman in question to live her embodied self differently then it would be an acceptable choice for her to make.

> Lynne: I think that she should have it because I think the only reason she is disappointed in herself for wanting to have the surgery is because of her friend's opinions but like if she's got a lack of self confidence then if she has the surgery then psychologically she'll be able to feel good about herself, so whatever she wants to do. ***So that's going to affect her whole life isn't it?***
> Shelley: What do you think about her friends telling her that she should just be self confident anyway?
> Lynne: Yeah I can see the point because I say that to people but you keep on telling people that, giving them compliments and if they don't end up feeling a bit happier then that's what they need to do. ***I mean I don't agree with cosmetic surgery for stupid reasons*** but if that's what she wants then she should do it. *(Lynne, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

Here Lynne makes clear the point that a uniform position for or against cosmetic surgery is too simplistic and that one's evaluation must take into account more that just appearance for the sake of appearance. She states that there are 'stupid reasons' for undergoing surgery but if the decision to have surgery is about feeling good about oneself then it would be okay. The confidence to be gained is about 'affecting her whole life'. A similar construction of the problem is offered by Emilia:

> If she's not entirely sure about the surgery then she shouldn't have it done but if her nose is really going to make that much difference in her life then maybe she should have the nose job. I'm not sure that I would do it myself

> but if it bothers her that much then it seems stupid to worry about it all your life. *(Emilia, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

The idea that the relation to the body is about the way in which the body is lived is also apparent in the young women's responses to the questions pertaining to their own desires to change their bodies if they could. The modifications desired were about transforming the ways in which the self lived its relation to the outside world. These responses suggest an experiential basis for the relation between self and body that goes beyond the surface appearance of the body. For example, many of the young women stated that the changes they would like to make would result in them having more impact or an enhanced sense of agency. The emphasis is not on 'looking' but on 'doing'.

> Shelley: How do you think making those changes would affect who you are - losing some weight?
> Caroline: I think I'd be a lot more confident really.
> Shelley: Why? What is the relationship between confidence and being thinner?
> Caroline: I think because you feel better about yourself. I mean I only have to exercise a couple of days and I feel better within myself. ***It's not about my body having changed*** but you feel different because you've done something instead of lying in bed and eating a lot of sweets...
> Shelley: So it isn't about the way your body looks?
> Caroline: Yeah, yeah. *(Caroline, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Shelley: If you were taller, how do you think that would affect you who are or how you feel about yourself?
> Prea: I think it would help my confidence. I don't know why it would. I just feel it would because like with some people I meet, like with the guys I meet they 're always a lot more taller and I feel that if I were taller I could, I don't know, ***be more in control.*** *(Prea, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

As discussed earlier, the desire for control expressed here could be interpreted as an effect of the kinds of social control women are subjected to. In some feminist critiques of the relationship women have with their bodies the notion of control is seen to represent the logic of the masculine while the body as the disorderly feminine becomes the object of regulation (MacCanell and MacCanell, 1987; Székely, 1988; Turner, 1996:126-142). Therefore, when women undertake a relation to the body as something which demands management and discipline they

are submitting themselves to process of normalisation and social control.

> Viewed historically, the discipline and normalisation of the female body - perhaps the only gender oppression that exercises itself, although to different degrees and in different forms, across age, 'race', class, and sexual orientation - has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control. In our contemporary preoccupation with appearance, which still affects women far more powerfully than men...may function as a backlash phenomenon... (Bordo, 1993:166).

Discipline, normalisation, self management - all of these ideas suggest that when women express a desire to change their bodies they are rendering their bodies docile and reproducing the gendered relations of power through which they are oppressed. The problem with this argument is that the desire to control or change the body is equated with social control and loss of power thus curtailing any attempt to unravel the complexity of what discipline or control means in terms of agency and lived bodies. Certainly for some of the young women in this study a dissatisfaction with the body was experienced as need to be more self-disciplined and individually responsible for the size and shape of the body indicating that bodily discipline can be about the development of a relation to the body in which agency becomes constrained. In the following discussion Jessica who is not overweight but would like to lose a bit of weight explains the effect this has on her ability to go out and enjoy herself. Although she feels she should be able to change her body she is frustrated that this is not something she feels is within her control.

> Shelley: How does wanting to change your body, like you said losing a bit of weight, make you feel?
> Jessica: Uncomfortable because I feel like I need to do it but I can't do it. It's out of my control. I mean everyone says that I'm not going to lose weight because I'm big boned but I'm still not happy with it. But I know it won't just drop off of me and I can't just eat whatever I want to eat. I've got no will power. I'll eat two chocolate bars and think, 'Oh god I'm going to be so fat now'. I don't feel like I'm in control of it at all and I wish I could be but I just don't think I'll ever be.
> Shelley: Does the way you feel about your body affect the way you feel about yourself? Is there a relationship?
> Jessica: Yeah in a way. I think that if you're confident in the way you look then you'll be confident in yourself. You feel capable of a lot more. Like if I'm having a thin day then I feel more confident and I can go out and talk to anyone and feel like great. If you feel you look great then you feel better about yourself and if I feel like I look fat in what I'm wearing then I won't

> and I'll feel really, really uncomfortable.
> Shelley: If you are having a fat day, would that prevent you from doing certain things?
> Jessica: It would prevent me from going out into town at night and having a really good time because I'd wear clothes that I feel comfortable in and they wouldn't fit in, in a night club. So if I'm having one of those days there's no point in going out where you get dressed up. *(Jessica, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care at Pearson College).*

Jessica makes a distinction between 'fat' days and 'thin' days. Having a 'fat' or 'thin' day though is not about the actual size of the body because her actual weight does not fluctuate dramatically. What she is expressing is the experience of the body that is not reducible to appearance. She explains how this influences her relation with herself and with others – relations dependant in some part on her experience of embodiment the nature of which can be either constraining or enabling. Although on many days the impulse to control and discipline the body leads to feelings of inadequacy for some of the young women interviewed the desire to change the body was also linked to confidence but in such a way that bodily transformation would offer more control thus producing an empowering effect.

> Lynne: I'd be taller. I don't know why...no I don't think it is because I actually want to be taller. I think it's just that I want to be taller in my personality than I am and with a bit more weight on me. I know it sounds strange but if I were taller, I'd be cautious towards people and their ulterior motives. *(Lynne, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care at Pearson College).*

> Prea: I'm sure that I'm meant to be taller than I am. I mean I would like to be taller but I know but I know that's one thing I can't change so I'm not even going to worry about it but I would like to be taller. You know so that I could make myself be heard and seen. *(Prea, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care at Pearson College).*

These expressions of a desire to change the body suggest that the meanings of cosmetic surgery can transcend their implementation as a disciplinary technology. By offering the opportunity to renegotiate embodiment, as Davis suggests, cosmetic surgery can be one of the many technologies employed in self formation or transformation. It can be part of an active strategy undertaken in a context in which embodied identity is 'the outcome of an individual's interaction

with her body and through her body with world around her' (Davis, 1995:169). This relationship and women's decisions to alter their bodies are situated in culture but never determined wholly by that location. The desire to transform the body is about wanting to live the body and the self in a different way. The notion of fluidity, which is so central to postmodern conceptualisations of the self and the body, is relevant here because the experience of the body is about ongoing, multiple processes and not just surface appearance. By theorising bodies and selves as processes we can begin to understand how each is implicated in the other.

In the following example the ways in which the relationship to the body, or how one feels about the body, can shift and alter is brought about not through actually altering the body's surface or the surface inscription of meanings but through an embodied process involving particular experiences and engagements in certain practices.

> Shannon: When I was younger I really wanted to be slimmer but as I've got older I've come to terms with myself as a person and I'm not striving to be somebody that I'm not whereas a couple of years ago I was striving to be that slim person in the magazine. The thing that stopped me was friends talking it through, growing up and realising that it is the media, looking around you and thinking, 'well there are people like that but not everybody' and in college everyone is their own personality. You dress the way you want to. No one criticises what you say. You've got your own opinions that you can say. Not like at school where your teachers say, 'No that's wrong' and where you're not allowed to speak. You can speak out more and be the person you are really rather than the person you were trying to be. I did want to be slim because of the media but now I don't want to be so I really can think about me as person and my body as being what I am. *(Shannon, 18 years old, Pearson College, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care).*

Shannon's relation to her body is mediated by fashion magazine images which she admits used to mediate her relation to her body but the body is never purely an object 'since it is the place of one's engagement with the world' nor is it pure subject 'in that there is always a material residue that resists incorporation into dominant symbolic schema' (McNay, 1999:98). The meaning of Shannon's body moves from the inscription of culture via her reading practices towards the meanings which emerge from her active involvement in practices such as talking with friends and going away to college where she begins to live her body in a

different way as a result of being able to speak and be heard. She is signalling a production of meaning that is neither purely subject (self) nor is it purely object (body). To understand this production demands a rejection of an ontology founded on binaries and dualisms.

If these accounts of the relation between self and body are to be more fully understood then the starting point for such an analysis must break free from the constraining influence of the mind/body dualism and the Cartesian tradition. This is a problem which continues to disturb many of the attempts made by feminists to think about embodied identity in a critical yet non-deterministic way and in a way which grants women agency. One possibility for a feminist reconfiguration of these problems is to begin from a radically altered ontological position. This movement towards a different ontology would allow the mind and body, representation and materiality, and narrativity and corporeality to be thought and explored in non-dichotomous ways. What are required are models and metaphors that implicate the subject in the object and lend insight into the constitutive articulation between the inside and the outside of the body (Grosz, 1994:23). A potential source of such metaphors is the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Grosz argues for the usefulness of their philosophical framework because in their work

> (S)ubject and object can no longer be understood as discrete entities or binary opposites. Things, material or psychical, can no longer be seen in terms of rigid boundaries, clear demarcations; nor, on an opposite track, can they be seen as inherently united, singular or holistic. Subject and object are series of flows, energies, movements, strata, segments, organs, intensities – fragments capable of being linked together or severed in potentially infinite ways other than those which congeal them into identities. Production consists of those processes which create linkages between fragments...(Grosz, 1994:167).

This framework implicitly undermines binarization by problematising the opposing terms within those binaries. Instead the framework theorises the subject, the social order and even the natural world as 'microprocesses, a myriad of intensities and flows, with unaligned or unalignable components which refuse to conform to the requirements of order or organisation. Bodies then can be thought not as *objects*, upon which culture writes its meanings, but as *events* that are continually in the process of becoming. This is a fluid process of transformation

that Shannon, in the example above, explains. Bodies, therefore, can be thought as multiplicities or assemblages that are never just found but are made and remade. This reconfiguration assumes the body is an active, productive force and not an effect produced through the repression of some essential origin. Indeed one of the advantages of this approach is that it allows the female body to be thought in affirmative terms or as a positive event rather than as a negated origin, a lack, or the negated other of phallocentric representations.

Questions regarding the body shift away from asking 'What do bodies mean?' to 'What can bodies do. What effects do they have?' because human action is productive rather than representational. This is a particularly useful counter to feminist evaluations of body practices in terms of whether they are liberatory or repressive. The framing of these questions relies upon 'the possibility of a free consciousness that could precede, and be revealed beneath, representations' (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:57). But if actions are seen as positive then evaluations of that action can be made on the basis of 'its force within a network of other acts and practices, and not in reference to a putative origin' (ibid.). The body is neither the site of consciousness nor is it merely an organic entity. Rather, understanding the body means examining what things it performs; what transformations and becomings it undergoes; the connections that it forms; and the capacities that it can proliferate (Grosz, 1994:165).

Theorising from this position allows the body to be seen as more than a limit and suggests that the body itself might have effects and modes of being that are not reducible to its status as image (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:41). This is not to say that representation does not in some way work to constitute the body but that representation is only *one event* among others and as such is not determinate.

> The body is a negotiation with images, but is also a negotiation with pleasure, pains, other bodies, space, visibility, and medical practice; *no single event in this field can act as a general ground for determining the status of the body* (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:43, emphasis added).

Women's bodies then are more than just the product of image consumption which implies that relying upon one particular practice in advance as an explanation

for women's relation to their bodies in general is not a tenable strategy. Indeed a Deleuzian ontology defies the application of singular explanations or accounts and collapses the humanist privileging of mind over body. A refusal of a single explanation or a point of causal origin is made in favour of locating the body, as an event, within the context of a multiplicity of practices and regimes; a network of activities through which a body becomes. It is these practices and connections which work to form the event of the body. Analysis of bodily practices requires an examination of the specific historical and political locations within which they occur but while also recognising unintended effects and the impossibility of predicting in advance the nature of or distribution of alignments. The implications of these suggestions is that the relationship between self and body – embodied subjectivity does away with notions of an authentic female body or identity and the rhetoric of alienation that accompanies many feminist anti-representational critiques. Being cannot be reduced to an effect of the consumption of images but instead is the result of various forms of self inventions via practices which also are not effects of representation but sites of production.

Returning to Emilia's quote which opened up this discussion we can achieve a more complex and thorough understanding of the relation between identity and body than by relying on Giddens' formulation of an instrumental relation to the body as something which is brought into the self-reflexive biography project as an object of choice. The body is never just an effect of reflexive engagement with images of lifestyle and shifting representations of possible selves to become because body images are not stereotypes that produce human beings as complicit subjects (Bray and Colebrook, 1998:38). This is not to argue that textuality cannot be implicated in the relation between self and body but that it is never sufficient as an explanation because the self/body relation is one which is lived via its immersion in a multiplicity of sites, knowledges, and practices. What has been proposed here and illustrated empirically is that a nondichotomous approach can lead to an understanding of embodied subjectivity as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, productions and constitution (Grosz, 1994:23).

In the next chapter the theme of the subject as embedded will continue to be explored by considering how having choices in one's life implies that there could

be limits to these choices. This discussion is oriented towards understanding how theories of reflexive modernisation fail to theorise social inequality and the differential relation individuals have to choice. As argued in chapter three, choice must be understood as embedded within particular relations and practices. The 'choosing', autonomous self and its limitations will be analysed drawing upon the notion of difference and the self/other relation. It will be argued that the self does not choose experiences that then constitute the self but that the self is constituted through experiences the meanings of which are organised through the relational operation of identity and difference. Subjectivity, therefore, is a site where the understandings of self and other are produced within specific locations where identities are always multiple and open to revision through participation in localised practices which can effect a shift in identifications.

Chapter Five: Relations of Difference and the Reflexive Self

> Detraditionalisation involves a shift of authority: from 'without' to 'within'. It entails the decline of the pre-given or natural orders of things. Individual subjects are themselves called upon to exercise authority in the face of disorder and contingency which is thereby generated. 'Voice' is displaced from established sources, coming to rest with the individual (Heelas, 1996:2).

> We are eye witnesses to a social transformation within modernity, in the course of which people will be set free from social forms of industrial society – class, stratification, family, gender status of men and women – just as during the course of the Reformation people were 'released' from the secular rule of the Church into society (Beck, 1992:87).

By suggesting that individuals have increasingly come to be the source of their own identities proponents of reflexive modernisation and detraditionalisation have moved away from the modernist roots of sociological accounts of social divisions and inequality. Indeed, the study of social relations and stratification has been a primary focus for sociology because the social divisions of "race", class, gender and ethnicity have been seen to be at the very heart of the social order and of culture. These relations are understood as being central to the formations of identity and the production of differential social outcomes for individuals and groups (Anthias, 1998:162). To suggest that their influence is diminishing, as theorists of reflexive modernisation have, is to challenge many sociological assumptions.

As discussed in chapter two these theories have received much criticism for emphasising the role of choice in identity formation while neglecting to give more careful consideration to ways in which social relations characteristic of modernity continue to structure and limit those choices. As Bradley (1996:203) argues recent processes of cultural change have eroded and destabilised long standing relationships to create a more fragmented and individualised society, however, this is not to say that identities have become free floating. She stresses that identities in late modernity are still embedded within lived relations which put constraints and

limits upon our possible range of identifications. The aim of this chapter is to explore how young women's identities are shaped by the discursive constructs of "race", class, gender and age and how these discourses might impact upon the identifications possible. This analysis will be located within a consideration of the relation between identity and difference to address the ways in which notions of difference enter into the narratives of the self produced by the young women in this study. The objective is to understand how difference works to organise an understanding of choices available and informs the process of negotiating those choices from different subject positions.

Dimensions of Difference

In contemporary social theory discussions of identity have become inextricably linked to the notion of difference. In postmodern theories of identity difference has become 'doxa, a magic word of theory and politics radiant with redemptive meanings' (Felski, 1997:11). While it has become ***the*** catchword for theorising social relations and social division its meanings and uses are many. For purposes of analysis three dimensions will be discussed here: difference as a historical process of fragmentation; difference as a relation through which meaning is produced; and difference as experiential diversity[1].

Difference as Fragmentation[2]

In this usage difference is linked to processes resulting in the transformation of modernity to late or postmodernity where modernity is conceptualised as a process of increasing differentiation of social spheres and the disembedding of social relations. This shift signals a fragmentation of the social order into a form

---

1 The conceptualisation of difference is developed by Barrett (1987) in a useful discussion of how 'difference' has been deployed in feminist writing and debate. Other uses of difference discussed by Barrett include difference as an understanding of the positional rather than absolute character of meaning and the use of difference in modern psychoanalytical accounts of sexual difference.

which is increasingly plural and fluid in nature. The ways in which we as individuals locate ourselves within the society in which we live and the ways in which we perceive others as locating us are affected by this process as the influence of relationships which were organised around ascribed characteristics dissolve (Bauman, 1996a, 1996b; Beck 1992; Giddens, 1991). Because they result from the various sets of lived relationships in which individuals are engaged identities also become less 'fixed'. Potential sources of identification multiply and the traditional parameters of identity, most significantly those defined by class relations, diminish as a common point of identification. While in modernity identity revolved around one's occupation or one's function in the public sphere or family, postmodern identities are often seen as constantly shifting and revolving around consumption, leisure, and media images (Kellner, 1992; Sarup, 1996).

In an extreme variation of this position identities become 'unattached' and 'free-floating' and discontinuity and fragmentation come to constitute the dominant experience of postmodern culture (Baudrillard, 1983a, 1983b). In this theorisation of modernity the unitary self of modernity has been thoroughly deconstructed leaving behind a subject whose identity is formed 'within a paradoxical space in which there are no fixed centres or margins' and where identities cannot be attached to singular, uncomplicated subject positions (Hetherington, 1998:24). Difference, rather than identity, becomes the organising principle of postmodern identities.

Theorists of reflexive modernisation stress that because plurality has become a central characteristic of late modernity choice necessarily becomes a key aspect of day to day life. As Giddens argues 'modernity confronts the individual with a complex diversity of choices and, because it is non-foundational, at the same time offers little help as to which options should be selected' (1991:80). These choices are not just about how to conduct one's life but more fundamentally about *who to be*. Late modern social conditions demand an active contribution on the part

---

2 The meaning of 'fragmentation' and the ways in which it is used in social theory are problematised in a discussion by McRobbie (1994:27-29). She makes the point that it is often used in ways that are either too vague or technical.

of individuals in constructing a 'do-it-yourself' biography where having to choose who to be from among a widening range of possibilities is not a choice in itself.

> The human being becomes...a choice among possibilities...Life, death, gender, corporeality, identity, religion, marriage, parenthood, social ties – all are becoming decidable down to the small print; once fragmented into options, everything must be decided (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1996:29)

In summary reflexive modernisation offers an interpretation of modernity as a process of differentiation whereby social forms associated with industrial society transform such that social relations and identities become more fluid, plural and necessarily chosen by a reflexive social actor. This assessment brings into question the extent to which individuals are constrained in the self they can choose – an issue that involves the second meaning of difference, that is, difference as a relation through which meanings are produced.

Difference as a Relation

Understanding how difference operates in association with identity has been a fundamental element of the ontological assumptions underlying poststructuralist theories (Weedon, 1997). Within the terms of poststructuralism meaning can only be understood through the method of its construction, that is, through the operation of difference (Crowley and Himmelweit 1992). This notion of difference is located within the Saussurean tradition of linguistics which takes as its fundamental premise that meaning is constructed through linguistic opposition rather than absolute reference (Barrett, 1987:33). Using this formulation of how meaning is produced the concept of identity must be understood as more than a relation of absolute sameness between two terms because what may not be immediately apparent in such a definition is that this sameness depends upon a relation to difference (it is often easier to say *what one is not*, rather than *what one is*).

A recognition of the relational production of meaning is important to the understanding of the production of identities within specific contexts because

difference is not just about processes which free agents from structure but also about the ways in which social relations are organised discursively through the meanings assigned to those relations. These meanings provide positions from which the individual achieves an understanding of the self in relation to others. Relational theories[3] of identity reveal that the establishment of identity rests upon the power to repress that which is 'other' – or that which is positioned as different (Hall, 1996:4-5). The self/other relation through which identities are organised is a binary construction in which one term is privileged over the other but with the value of each term reliant upon the other term. Identity is located in the relation between the two terms rather than in the terms themselves. It is not possible to demarcate a division between presence and absence because the former always contains the latter. In this regard the terms are not opposites but inevitably defined through each other (Burr, 1995:107). The implication of this relation is that in undermining the foundations upon which the unified subject depends deconstruction has delivered a subject whose coherence relies upon that which is repressed.

Applying Derridean notions of différance demonstrates how identity is not only about defining the self in relation to the other but how that relation is an expression of power[4]. Deconstruction has effectively shown that meaning is never fully present in a sign and therefore can never be secured once and for all. The closure that is actually reached through the fixing of meaning is, therefore necessarily, an act of power. The binary of self/other within which identity resides contributes to the organisation of social relations in which those who can identify with the privileged term do so at the expense of those who are marginalised.

> In the hierarchical language of the West, what is alien represents otherness, the site of difference and the repository of our fears and anxieties...difference speaks of the otherness of "race", sex and class, whose presence and politics so deeply divide our society. It is within their polarities of white/black, masculine/feminine, hetero/homosexual, where one term is always dominant and the other subordinate, that our identities

3 For discussions of identity which rely upon the notion of difference as a relation see Anthias (1999), Brah (1996), Hall (1996) and Rutherford (1990).

4 Derrida's concept of différance means both to differ (in space) and defer (to postpone) (Humm, 1995). For an explication of différance see Derrida (1976, 1978, 1982).

> are formed. Difference in this context is always perceived as the effect of the other (Rutherford, 1990:10).

The Other is the present absence that must be contained and regulated as it has the potential to threaten the very stability which identity assumes. However, the repression upon which identities depend also means that these sites of the marginalised Other can become sites of resistance. In summary, difference refers to the ways in which meanings are produced in the relationship between terms where those terms of defined in a negative relationship to each other (I am this because I am not that). The significance of this relational production of meaning is that these binaries discursively organise social relations into a hierarchical configuration.

There might be more choice involved in questions about who one wants to be due to detraditionalisation and the proliferation of axes of identity but this does not necessarily mean that difference as a relation ceases to exist. This is because it is a relation upon which exclusion operates and as such is a fundamental aspect of social relations through which power operates to inscribe the meanings of differentiations and constitute those differences as hierarchically organised categories within the context of particular economic, political and cultural circumstances (Brah, 1996:105-106). Difference as a relation through which meanings arise is not only about individuals being located across a range of different identities but that differentiation is also about the stratification of those locations (Anthias, 1999).

Difference as Experiential Diversity

The third dimension contained within the notion of 'difference' refers to diversity within social categories such as gender. Within feminist theory the recognition has been made that the category 'Woman' is not constituted by uniformity but by a diversity of experience and situations (Riley, 1988). As such the category of 'Woman' is divided by multiple axes of identification with the implication that it is difficult to assume in advance any foundation for shared identity between women (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1990; hooks, 1991). This

understanding of difference as experiential diversity has been central to the need to understand identity as a multiplicity.

The concept of difference, both as a process which gives rise to a particular set of social conditions and as a relation through which meaning is produced, has also been central to the development of a recognition that identities are located at the point of intersection between multiple ways of being or of making identifications. These ways of being are not just about being female for example or being black but are about the identities that emerge through the complex interaction of different discourses which are inscribed in everyday practices and relations. The articulation of an identity that is not unitary is not just an expression of the sum of constituent parts because identity is not additive but interlocking. The oppressions that one experiences are not a question of *quantity but quality* so for example racism experienced by black women does not add an extra burden to sexism but a qualitatively different burden (Spelman, 1990:123). It is within the conflicting and often contradictory intersection of discursive positions that new identities may emerge which are not just about being female or black or middle class but about how all modes of identification articulate within a particular context.

Poststructuralist theories have exposed that identity, because of its link to difference, can never be reduced to a single or predictable location. This is illustrated by assumptions underlying identity politics - namely that a single category of identity can provide the basis for unification around a common identity because members of this category share particular characteristics, experiences, beliefs, needs and so on.

> ...all political movements that focus on a particular identity (femaleness, gayness) as the basis for political action, effectively presuppose that particular properties define such groups, implying that there is an essence within identity which is fixed and can be unearthed through a discussion of an oppressed group's experience of subjectivity (Whelehan, 1995:205)[5].

[5] On the other hand theorists such as Spivak (1987; 1990) argue that a 'strategic essentialism' can be a useful strategy in developing a politics based upon identity.

The problem with using a single point of identity as a starting point is that this move reduces the multiple aspects of one's social location to a single category. What any move towards reduction produces is a relation of oppression because assuming a unitary and unified experience denies that individuals are always more than just one category of identity and that these other ways of understanding the self may be equally, if not more, significant. The subject must be thought of in ways that can allow for the operation of multiple identifications within specific social and historical contexts. As Hall explains a discursive approach to identifications

> sees identification as a construction, a process never completed – always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost' sustained or abandoned. Though not without its determinate conditions of existence, including the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it, identification is in the end conditional, lodged in contingency. Once secured, it does not obliterate difference...identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing over, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' – an over-determination or a lack, but not never a proper fit, a totality (Hall, 1996:2-3).

Postmodern identities transcend the modern logic of 'either/or' and instead follow that of 'both/and' (Burr, 1995:107). Reducing the multiplicity of the self to a single location constructs the self as a totality and violates the complex unity of identity that is forged out of differences by characterising, in a totalistic fashion, one particular attributed essence – or a constellation of essences – as accounting for the complete identity of the subject (Taylor, 1998:342)[6].

Although there is never a single narrative or discursive positioning that can account for identity this does not mean that identities with their excess of meaning and fragments escape unity and coherence. Recognising the centrality of difference to identity is about the tension between the two, not the 'triumph' of one over the other. To understand this relationship it is useful to distinguish between two distinct yet related forms of identity where the relationship between identity and difference or sameness and uniqueness is enacted: categorical and ontological

(Taylor, 1998:345). Categorical identity is about the sameness that results from the recognition and classification of others as being the same in terms of social categories. Ontological identity, is about identity as uniqueness resulting from the recognition of individual selves as different from other selves.

Without positing an over determination of the subject by the social it is possible to assert that our identities work to align our subjective feelings with objective places[7] we occupy in the social and cultural world thereby stitching the subject into structure (Hall, 1992: 276). This involves symbolic processes - how we make sense of social relations and practices through language or symbols (for example how we read sexual difference and the meanings we assign to that difference). It also involves the ways in which we make sense of our identities in relation to others, internalise these meanings and how we then 'live' out these differences within social relations (Woodward, 1997:12). Tension is drawn between the positions taken up by the subject and the positions which seek to inscribe the subject in particular ways thus the dual nature of subjectivity (subject of/subjected to).

The meanings that are assigned to social categories work to organise relations in specific ways but these meanings can shift and change such that there is both stability and flux in operation. Identities are based on social categories or constructs used to define, explain and/or justify various forms of differentiation. As socially constructed these categories are inherently unstable, contestable and historically specific. But an element of stability is introduced by the lived sets of orderly social relationships which are organised by social categories and persist over time. Together these two elements – social constructs and lived relations – can be used to understand that identities are constructed in a social world which is both unstable and continuous, fluid and structured (Bradley, 1996:7).

---

6 Taylor discusses this in relation to welfare discourses and the problems that social identity as a product of difference and similarity pose for social policy.

7 Hall argues that identity bridges the gap between the 'inside' and the 'outside' or the personal and public worlds. Objective places here refers, in sociological terms, to structures or patterns of social relations that persist over time.

In summary, the possibilities for constructing an identity depend upon the availability of discourses at any given moment. Discourses provide the positions from which individuals actively interpret the world and the positions from which they are governed. The multiplicity at play within a particular context, however, does not indicate an equivalence amongst positions. As Weedon argues 'language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested' (1997:21). Identity is produced in a range of discursive practices – economic, social, and political – the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power (ibid.). Identities are constrained by the discourses that are available to the individual and the social forces which seek to privilege certain meanings over others. Identities are always located within sets of social relations and difference works to systematically organise these relations within and across contexts. As such it is central to the structured formations of gender, class, and racism (Brah, 1996:118). In a stratified and hierarchical social order difference has implications for how the self can be spoken.

Theories of reflexive modernisation have been accused of not adequately addressing these issues of inequality which work to define life chances (Anthias, 1999; Bradley, 1996; May and Cooper, 1995). The 'do-it-yourself' biography of reflexive modernisation is not classed or gendered for example. The problematic tendency in theories of reflexive modernisation is toward an almost complete detachment of identity from institutional contexts resulting in an insufficient amount of attention being given to how identity is linked to sets of lived relationships which involve 'differential access to power and resources and are therefore not only aspects of social differentiation but also of social inequality' (Bradley, 1996:203). The suggestion made by proponents of reflexive modernisation that individuals are being set freed from social forms of industrial society and that identities as a result are becoming more fluid (Beck, 1992:87)

requires a consideration of the multiple ways in which identifications are made[8] and how these identifications articulate with life choices and life chances. If a modernist account, in a somewhat determinist fashion reduces inequality to a singular position, then a more useful framework is a poststructuralist approach which takes into account the multiplicity of identifications within specific and local contexts thereby providing a point of entry into theorising difference.

Narratives About Choice and Constraint

As discussed in chapter three narratives of the self are given form through the ordering of experiences and events into an internally consistent trajectory. However, the structuring of one's narrative is also influenced by the positioning of the individual within discourses which make available particular meanings and positions from which one is able to assign significance to one's experience. Contours of the narrative of the self are about choice, as Giddens suggests, but they are also about the constraints that seek to limit or impose meaning on those choices. Over privileging the extent to which choices are available to social actors who occupy stratified positions within a social order marked by social divisions leaves unanswered questions connected with the ways in which late modern identities still rely upon and reproduce relations of inequality. Having choice is to a large degree about having freedom from constraints, therefore, being able to 'choose a self' and bring that self into being is tied to the resources – material, symbolic, cultural and so on that one has access to. Positionings within discourse then work to shape the contours of the story as the construction of a narrative of the self is done in tension with those forces which limit the *kind* of story that can be told. The young women in this study identified a range of factors which they felt limited the choices they had available to them. These discussions about the limits they experienced gave

8 This is not to suggest that multiple ways of making identifications were not possible in modernity. Indeed modernity, as a historical epoch is characterised by a proliferation of identity schemes (Calhoun, 1994:12). Rather the point is that the ontological assumptions of poststructuralist theory allow for an interrogation of the multiple and shifting processes that are an inherent part of identity formation.

some indication of how they were positioned by others and how they positioned themselves within relations of inequality.

The sites in which the young women were interviewed reflect the kinds of social institutions within which young women's choices about their identities are located. Each of the sites included represents a specific kind of institution established to provide services to young women and as such operate to organise young women's lives differently in terms of the how their needs, resources, abilities, aspirations and so on are defined and managed. For example, attending a private all girls' school like Greenwood is a distinctly different point of location from a youth skills programme, like Youthworks, designed to meet the needs of those young women who have few resources or options available. There is a sense that perhaps the young women *within* each site were not so different from each other but that the most apparent differences were between young women positioned *across* the sites.

In certain respects the interview sites, as social institutions, represent different objective positionings within a social order divided according to relations of ''race'', class, disability, gender, and sexuality. These sites are also internally organised according to the definition of these relations, therefore, young women come to be positioned within each site according to these relations. Depending upon which site a young women enters she will be positioned as 'a single mother', 'middle class', 'a young Asian woman', 'a school leaver', 'an ethnic minority' and so on. All of these positionings have implications for the choices that young women have available to them within those sites; how those choices are constructed by specific institutional discourses; how the young women interpret those choices; and how they position themselves within those discourses. The main discourses that arose in the interviews with both the young women and the practitioners related to class[9] (material/cultural/social resources), gender, ''race'', ethnicity and age.

9 Bradley's (1996:19) definition is useful here. Class is a social category which refers to lived relationships surrounding social arrangements of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption but not just confined to economic relationships but a broader web of social relationships including lifestyle, educational experiences and patterns of residence.

Discourses about each of these reflect the ways in which those practitioners working with young women position them around axes of difference and the ways in which young women also position themselves.

Practitioners'[10] *Constructions of Difference*

Each of the practitioners described at length the 'kind of young woman' who would be situated within that site. Their narratives reveal the dominant discourses that operate to organise an understanding of the young women for whom they provide services. One of the most prevalent ways of describing the young women was in terms of class but this notion was rarely linked to occupational status. Instead 'class' expressed more abstract concepts like access to resources – with resources being broadly defined. The Head of Sixth Form of Ripley School in the following excerpt constructs this school as a place of mixed class and "race" but his narrative reveals a particular construction of these relations.

> Mr. Preston: The school itself is in a very middle class area as you can see by the houses in the surrounding area. There's some very nice, big houses around the park areas. It's a well sought after suburb to live in. Our traditional catchment area goes from this area here into the city centre. We don't draw many from further north of the city but it goes into the city centre and into Harley and Chilton. Which are very much, and have been for years, decades - working class areas - cheap houses, high density and certainly over the past 25 to 30 years those areas have become more ethnic minorities. Harley in particular has a large Asian community and Chilton is an Afro-Caribbean community so the school as such draws from this area and those two in particular. We also get a mixture of children from the Granthill area which is rather different in that it is very much white working class. Not a particularly nice type of person in actual fact. There's a certain amount of racial politics and so on that goes on in Granthill which is not particularly savoury. Fortunately we didn't get too many from there but there's usually a handful in each year and that means...but fortunately within the school there doesn't seem to be too much racial tension but I wouldn't like it if we had a larger group in from that area there with the number of children we have who are ethnic minorities. But the white children that reside in this area - the middle class white children are a little bit more liberal minded so again there's not the racial problems that might be there between the working class whites and the blacks and Asians. It

10 For a description of the research sites refer to appendix one.

> makes for an interesting place but as I said fortunately we've not really had any major racial problems. Certainly not between whites and ethnic minorities. If anything, if there are any problems then it's often between Afro-Caribbeans and the Asians for one reason or another *(Mr. Preston, Head of Sixth Form, Ripley School)*.

Within this site relations were constructed according to specific discourses by Mr. Preston – ''race'' and class being predominant. When young women enter into this site they will be positioned within these discourses that not only define social relations in specific ways but also seek to inscribe individuals in specific ways. Mr. Preston, for instance produced a story about Ripley as a place defined by social divisions. This is a terrain mapped by relations of difference in which the student population is located according to these relations: class, racial and ethnic. These relations were constructed in a particular way - as potentially conflictual and problematic.

The other research sites were similarly discursively constructed according to these dynamics of inequality. If the young women who entered into the interview sites were located according to class background or in terms of their access to resources then Greenwood School defined the upper end of the scale with Careers guidance and especially the Youthworks Programme as fixing the limit of the other end of the scale. Having material resources was central to the way in which the Head Teacher of Greenwood School located the young women attending that school.

> Mrs. Conway: We're not a catchment area although we of course draw from within an area where parents can drive the pupils. They are parents who have decided that they want private education for their girls. Necessarily, therefore, they are wealthier. On the whole I would say middle class to whom education is very important. I would go on to say there is also a large section of people in the school who's parents are not really interested in education at all. They are more interested in the social kudos of having their child in at private school...The parents are very concerned about making a good lifestyle for their children whether it's through education or social contacts or whatever. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that they are going to leave and drift *(Mrs. Conway, Head Teacher, Greenwood School)*.

In this narrative the young women are positioned in relation to the resources they have available – wealth and cultural capital both of which are necessary for the young women to be at this school but which then serve the goal of perpetuating that privilege. This construction draws on the same discourses as the ones used by practitioners to portray both the Careers Guidance service and the Youthworks programme but in these particular sites the young women were located in a much different way within those discourses because they were described as having restricted access to the kinds of resources essential to having choices about their lives.

> Diane: There's an increasing number of young people who are coming through who are identified as having 'additional support needs' which basically means they're going to need some support because they have an academic need - literacy or numeracy support, behavioural problems, housing problems, criminal issues or a whole combination of that is going to prevent them from accessing or achieving the highest qualification they can. They're going to need support to do that. There's a large number of those young people that don't emerge until they get to the point where they need some money and that's why they turn up. An increasing number of young people are literally thrown out of the home at 16 because their parents can't afford them. Or that's the reason that is given. *(Diane, youth guidance counsellor, Careers Guidance).*

> Geri: [Youthworks] is an organisation that works with the most excluded types of young women. Young women who are excluded from standard provision really. They might be excluded because they've got a disability, it might be their colour, their sexuality, it might be the fact that they don't attend school. They are called non-attenders or they might be excluded from school rather than expelled. Generally, it's about building confidence and offering alternate choices... They don't have similar problems but they are all excluded in some way. It might be that they've been in care all their life. We've got a young woman who is just out of prison. We've got another young woman who is using drugs. And then we also quite often tend to work with young teenage women with children. Simply by having children so young, they are excluded from a lot of things. So although the problems are all different they are all excluded. *(Geri, Youthworker, Youthworks programme).*

Both Diane and Geri drew on the notion of resources made available through family background which was then placed within a discourse of social exclusion. For Geri this exclusion was also linked to a wide range of different

relations: ''race'', gender, class, disability and sexuality. Within each of these types of relations the young women who participated in Youthworks were marginalised. Diane also explicitly linked the problems faced by the young women at the careers guidance centre to a scarcity of resources available to families which ultimately forces young women to acquire economic independence – something that is difficult for them given that they have not had access to the kinds of resources and support required to achieve independence. As Diane explained, one of the reasons that young women surface at the guidance centre is because they need money. Gaining qualifications, finding a job, or joining a training scheme are ways to meet this goal but for many of them another alternative is to claim state benefits. However, in order to do so regulations require that they must first register with Careers Guidance which, as Diane explains, has the unfortunate obligation to police this provision.

Studies of youth transitions have often shown that young people from different classes and class fractions go through distinctly different patterns of educational attainment with middle class youth more likely to attend private schools in preparation for university while working class youth are more likely to enter into training schemes (Bates and Riseborough, 1993)[11]. The examples cited here indicate that class, as a social construct, is used as an interpretative device by practitioners to account for why young women end up where they do within different types of institutions. In this way class is used as a way of conceptualising life chances and for explaining how it is that young women's lives will have different outcomes.

Resources: The Link With Choice and Confidence

In descriptions of the young women's positions within sets of social relations it emerged that having choices and options were understood by practitioners within the context of the kinds of resources they possessed. Therefore

because the young women were positioned differently in relation to their access to resources, they were also seen as having different relations to choice. Having choices was constructed as a privilege not necessarily explained within the context of 'social class' but by the specific 'family background' the young women had come from, upon which their access to resources and, therefore, their relationship to choices depended. For example, Mr. Preston spoke of the educational system as a system that favours the middle classes in terms of the structure of the courses that are on offer for students at the age of sixteen - the system favours those who tend to go on the traditional middle class route from A-levels to university. Diane also defined the parameters of choice available to young women at Careers Guidance as mediated by economic necessity[12].

> Diane: I think it's still the case that a lot of families - particularly those on lower incomes – have a need for that young person to work and would find it difficult to support them through college situations as a result of that...There is much more of a push from parents to decide, get settled and get moving onto your career path as quickly as possible. There's a lot of fear from parents about 'Where is this going? Is it leading anywhere?' rather than a young person deciding to do a college course because they feel it's what they will enjoy - the pleasures you get from learning and developing etc. etc. A lot of that kind of privilege really has gone. *(Diane, youth counsellor, Careers Guidance Centre).*

The importance of having confidence and being able to do what one wanted was, as discussed in chapter three, a central part of the narratives constructed by these young women. In these narratives confidence was expressed as an internal quality of the self that was used in the navigation of choices. However, all of the practitioners linked the expression of confidence - being able to assert oneself and actively make choices - on the part of young women to the availability of external

---

11 The reproduction of structured relations of inequality, such as class, has been central to the tradition of youth studies. Refer to Furlong and Cartmel (1997) and Jones and Wallace (1990).

12 The GNVQ in Health and Social Work at Pearson College was also constructed by the tutors as a place within which one's social class had repercussions. For example working class families were said to be less supportive of their daughters pursuing a qualification than middle class families.

resources demonstrating the subjective and the objective dimensions of choice[13]. One of the themes that emerged in these discussions was that confidence was constructed as the product of having a particular 'family background' and therefore a resource in itself which could impact upon the ways in which young women navigated the kinds of choices they encountered. Thus, the recurring topic of confidence was placed within a discourse about life chances.

> Geri: If you're talking about youth work you are talking about the ability to make informed choices and to make positive choices in your life. Well a lot of the young women that we work with, their choices are limited by outside factors and by their own confidence. Sometimes the only choices they feel they have are self harming in various ways. It might be through drugs or it might be through actual self harm or they might feel the only option open to them is to have children *(Geri, youth worker, Youthworks).*

This characterisation compared to the levels of confidence exercised in the other interview sites. Mr. Preston explained that in his school there was a big difference in confidence which he accounted for by drawing on the discourse of social class. The greater amount of confidence he ascribed to middle class youth within the context of education was attributable, he argued, to the fact that their parents understood the system and knew how to navigate it to the best advantage. In Mr. Preston's account social class becomes something objective; as something that 'exists out there' independent of the individuals who come to occupy those positions; as a pattern of social relations that exist over time and becomes an interpretative device for locating and explaining life chances. He explained,

> The dominant culture within this area is middle class and amongst the students themselves and those students from perhaps more working class backgrounds can feel a bit peripheral. Not that there is any overt snobbery or anything like that but it is a cultural difference...The middle classes are expecting to go on to jobs of the type that their parents do or perhaps even better if they can.

---

13 These dimensions are reflected in Hall's (1992:276) definition of identity where the objective refers to patterns of social relations that exist over time and the subjective refers to the individual's perception of the self and how they fit into those sets of external social relations.

At Greenwood school Mrs. Conway also linked confidence to resources. With regards to the young women at the private school she said that in general they have been so 'loved and so treasured and bolstered up' that they think they can have what they want simply because they want it and not because their abilities warrant it or because they have worked for it. Therefore, not only are they used to being given what they want but they've been *given the confidence to expect it.* This expectation contrasts with the young women who participated in the Youthworks programme. As Geri explained, the notion of confidence has resonance for the young women she works with because the media often depicts young women as confident, self assured and outgoing thereby providing a normative point of reference. For the particular group of young women at Youthworks though their perception of confidence is that it is something which belongs in the domain of *other* young women but not theirs. It is perceived as something that young women in general should possess but something that they lack.

Within the setting of careers guidance, confidence was explained by Diane as deriving not from privilege but from material necessity. In negotiating the choices they have available many young women often seem to have the confidence to vocalise their opinions and make demands on those who provide services but, Diane said, underlying this surface layer of confidence is fear derived from a lack of resources.

> Diane: It is based on fear of what will happen to me if I don't do this because there's no one else to do it for me. There is an increasing number who actually do feel that that they can't earn enough in a job or training to survive so they look at benefits as an option...Going through the stepping stones [to getting a proper job] is more difficult when the financial need is great. *(Diane, Youth Counsellor, Careers Guidance Centre).*

Finally, the issue of young women having confidence was also discussed by the tutors at the further education college and like Diane they linked the ability to make demands of the system to be born of necessity. Over the past few years these tutors noticed that more young women have to work full or part time while doing their studies. As a result of time pressure and the feeling of strain they may in turn

be inclined to be more aggressive when asking for help from tutors and when making their needs known. What all of these examples indicate is that relations of difference, notably social class, are used as a framework to interpret the relationship young women have to choice as well as how they will go about negotiating these choices. Choice is constructed as a part of relations of difference within which young women can be positioned. The identities that young women are producing are linked by the practitioners to the unequal distribution of choice – a reflection of their positionings within patterns of intersecting social relations that exist over time. In these accounts difference translates into a condition of having, or not having, choices.

Just as the interview sites were constructed by discourses about class, gender also entered into the ways in which the sites and the practices within them were constituted. One of the clearest examples of this was the way in which routes through the institutional settings were perceived as gendered with young women more likely to pursue social sciences and humanities. Although notice was given to the way in which traditionally male dominated subjects like maths, sciences and business were being entered by young women. For example, Mr. Preston maintained that vocational courses were more likely to be pursued by young women than young men[14]. The GNVQ in Health and Social Care at Pearson College was also described as traditionally female dominated and perceived as being attractive to some young women as 'anybody can be a carer because it's seen as a female thing'[15].

Young women and young men within these sites were also constructed as being different in relation to their educational, vocational and social needs. At the careers guidance centre it was claimed that at age 16 it was more likely for young men to leave the school system but amongst those young women who did, they

---

14 He mentions the GNVQ in Health and Social Care as being particularly gendered i.e. pursued predominantly by young women with participation by young men as rare.

15 The young women who came to the further education college to do this GNVQ were described as predominantly wanting to pursue careers in nursing or social work. However,

were more likely to be looking for a long term career path and financial independence rather than just a job to earn some money immediately. In the context of youth work, the pattern of young women's needs was contrasted with that of young men.

> Geri: With young men a lot of youth care provision tends to be focused upon offending behaviour because I think that a young woman and a young man can have similar situations but what young men tend to do is go out and smash things up, steal, beat up other people. What young women tend to do is self harm so like drinking or slashing themselves. So there is different sorts of interventions and different sorts of work *(Geri, youthworker, Youthworks)*.

One of the defining characteristics of the gender discourses drawn upon is that gender, as a social category, was incorporated into explanations as a social relation that had undergone significant historic transformation. In this regard gender was formulated as a discourse that had, through social change, become defined by increased choices and opportunities for young women. The transformation of gender as an organising principle of women's lives provided a framework within which to understand young women's choices in the present compared to a past when women generally had to choose either domesticity or a career within a limited number of areas. Mrs. Conway, for example, who has been involved in teaching for 30 years, reflected upon the choices she had available when she was the age of the young women interviewed.

> Mrs. Conway: When I left school, in my particular circumstance which wasn't the same as the girls in this school - I was very much from a working class background where going on to any form of further education was considered bizarre. Girls left home only to get married. Their first job tended to be from home and they earned money for awhile and paid money into the family income then left to marry. When they left to marry, they left work and you brought up your family and then later on when your children had grown up you might just go back to do some sort of work against old age or your husband had left you or I don't know but certainly to insist on staying at school beyond the age of fifteen, as it was then, was considered odd unless you went to secretarial college. That was allowed or perhaps if

---

many of the young women interviewed claimed that they wanted to use the qualification for entry into police work, prison work and probation services.

> you went to train as a nurse. That was another one that was more or less smiled upon. But to go on to university was quite a fight. Young ladies only went to train as nurses or teachers. They certainly didn't do anything else. Whilst I didn't break away from the teacher mould I certainly broke away and went to university. Even in so doing it was considered by my family that this was a waste of education because I would only get married and get children. *(Mrs. Conway, Head Teacher, Greenwood School).*

The perception that young women have more options and the freedom to choose what they want to do in relation to education, employment and family intersected with the ways in which the young women were also located in relation to access to resources. Both school leavers and the young women in the Youthworks programme were seen as less likely to be able to take advantage of expanding options now available to young women because of their lack of resources. In Diane's account, however, even those young women who were positioned as materially disadvantaged were seen to be actively engaging with the choices that were available. She explained that many of the young women perceive that they have as much right to choose a career or training option as a their male counterparts and that in many instances they feel that they've got more ability. One implication is that they are not limiting their choices in terms of what is expected of women for example by dismissing non-stereotyped career options in favour of caring work or domestic work.

As was the case with social class it was common for confidence to be talked about in gendered terms across all the sites. In general young women were seen as being empowered by the changes that have occurred to social conditions in the last thirty years and that this allowed them to confront their decisions with a substantial degree of assertiveness and determination.

> Mr. Preston: I mean there's no doubt that a lot of girls about 25 years ago were - well it's not as though they were actually ever forced down you know in the sense you know 'You're a girl and you're not as good as the boys'. It wasn't like that. On the other hand they didn't sort of have that confidence whereas now they realise that they can actually make a success of things...In general I feel that there's a lot more confidence and togetherness around the girls as a group than the boys. I think as well professionally they know they can hack it now as well. The girls feel confident that they can

> become solicitors or they can become whatever they want to *(Mr. Preston, Head of Sixth Form, Ripley School)*.

One of the links made between young women having more confidence and more options was with them also having higher expectations for what they should be achieving. These expectations were also interpreted as being gendered. Compared to young men, young women were perceived as working harder, being more committed and having more at stake. In the context of careers guidance young men were seen as less able to articulate what they wanted. At Ripley School the boys were perceived to be constrained in their pursuit of academic achievement by peer pressure to 'be cool' and to appear to not care about their academic performance. Mrs. Conway, in her lengthy experience of teaching said that young women today want to make decisions about their lives and get on with it whereas young men are happy to 'kick around the world and anywhere and everywhere and come back and do A-levels' because forgoing these decisions isn't perceived as the disaster it would be by young women. This achievement ethic though was seen as having, many practitioners felt, an unfortunate effect because some young women held themselves to an unrealistically high standard of achievement and seemed to feel more deeply the impact of not being able to achieve the goals they set for themselves. In a discussion of the meaning of 'girl power', Diane explained that it was generally positive that young women have more power and confidence but that this could also be potentially harmful to the interests of young women if the individualistic aspects of these conditions were to become too dominant.

> Diane: I think that young women are seeing that they don't have to be victims in situations. I think that is very healthy and strong but I think that on top of that - what I wouldn't like to lose - is the fact that if there are things that they're not sure about and they want to check out that they don't feel that they always have to take it on board themselves and deal with it by themselves. *(Diane, counsellor, Careers Guidance Centre)*.

Compared to discourses about class and gender, discourses of "race" and ethnicity were drawn on less often as a way of understanding the ways young women were positioned in relation to options and choices. When racial and ethnic differences were spoken about they translated into a difference of needs.

> Shelley: Can the groups that you organise for young women be about whatever issues they have?
> Geri: Yeah those issues and obviously with a large number of staff people are more interested in other things. Like myself and one of the other workers are interested in body image. Certainly for our black girls worker that is a lot of what her work is based around because she feels that's what is important for the girls that she works with because of their culture and what it's like growing up as a young black girl in Chilton. *(Geri, youthworker, Youthworks programme).*

The effect of ethnic or racial difference was often constructed as deriving from the combined effect of its intersection with other relations of difference mainly class and gender. At Ripley school which has a mixture of Asian, Black and White students, the chances of continuing with education were explained by the Headteacher of sixth form as being about an intersection of class, gender and ethnicity. In the following example ethnicity intersects with gender to affect whether young women go on to university but class also operates to increase the chances of this happening.

> Mr. Preston: What tends to happen is when they reach the end of sixteen a lot of the working class children tend to leave. The ones that stay into the sixth form are predominantly middle class and predominantly white but not exclusively. You met some girls who are from an Asian background but they tend to be perhaps the slightly better off, if you like, of the Asian students.
> Shelley: So class is a bigger difference than gender?
> Mr. Preston: Well the one area is amongst the Asian girls who are restricted by their families. Their expectations are very much pulled back by that. Where they are told what they can do. The more liberal families will say 'yes you can go to university' but amongst the Asian girls there is a problem because the families for whatever reasons want the girls to stay close to home, close to the family. Now the more liberal ones will say 'yes you can go to university no problem but you're going to go to one these local ones' so in other words 'you can live at home. We don't want you to live in a hall of residence'...It's very difficult for me to say anything like, 'I don't think you should do that'. It's none of my business in the end but it's difficult for the girls because they are torn both ways.

Interviews with practitioners show how discourses of difference are deployed within each of the places where young women's choices about education,

training and career decisions are being made. Discourses about ''race'', class, gender and ethnicity operate to organise relations within those sites and the practices that constitute those sites. They also serve as a way of positioning young women with regards to what kinds of choices they have available and what they might expect to achieve. This kind of deployment of social categories reflects Giddens' 'double hermeneutic' – the slippage between frames of meaning utilised by lay actors and those used in the practice of the social sciences (Giddens, 1984:374). Categories developed as part a social scientific analytical metalanguage can be appropriated by social actors and then become part of the social world they seek to describe. Furthermore, these accounts constructed by practitioners reveal how categorical identity is used as an explanatory device - as a way of defining individual's similarity and locating individuals within sets of relations like gender, ''race'', class, ethnicity and age which are assumed to exist as stable sets of patterns across time and space.

Positioning the Self – Positioning Others

Because identity has increasingly been linked to notions of fluidity and choice the young women in this study were asked about their perceptions of having choices available and about the limitations they perceived as being set on those choices. They were first asked to identify limitations faced by young women in general and then to identify the limitations they had experienced themselves. This exercise - the consideration of choices available to young women in general followed by a shift towards their own positions revealed their understanding of how exclusion operates in both the categorical and ontological realms of identity. The discourses that were used by practitioners to situate these young women were also drawn upon by the young women themselves in their explanations for how and why choices might be limited. They were all able to position themselves and position other young women within the relations of ''race'', class, gender, ethnicity and age. The tendency, however, was to position the self in relation to the Other where the

self was defined in a negative relationship to the Other[16]. This differentiation was most evident in the movement made in speaking about the limits placed on young women in general to speaking about the limits they felt impeded their own choices. In this movement the self is differentiated from the Other – it is *other* young women who are seen as occupying a distinctly different position from the one in which they positions themselves. It is other young women who have limits placed on them. The following excerpts illustrate how the Other enters into the narrative that defines the self with regards to gender, ethnicity and class and how these positionings are related to notions of choice.

Gender

> Shelley: What kinds of things do you think limit the opportunities for young women?
> Jessica: They don't always get the same chances do they? They're still expected in a way to be staying at home having children. They don't want to promote women too high or give them too much responsibility because they think they'll be going soon to have kids and things. They just still are not in the lead. They're behind men.
> Shelley: Do you think there is anything that has limited the kind of choices you've been able to make for yourself?
> Jessica: In a way but not really especially in prison work where more women are coming in all the time. *(Jessica, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

In this exchange the positioning of the self and the positioning of the other within the discourse of gender is incongruous. It is *other* young women who potentially will come up against sexual discrimination in the workplace. Jessica makes this assertion yet does not take up this position herself even though her goal is to work within a prison setting – perhaps one of the most non-traditional careers a young woman could aspire to. A similar response to the question is given by Lucy who does not identify with gender relations as producing limits to her own choices but does construct gender relations as affecting the organisation of women's lives in general.

---

16 The structure of the relationship follows the form: 'I am what I am because I am not that (the Other)'. The self is defined against the other.

> Shelley: What kind of things do you think limit the kinds of opportunities young women have?
> Lucy: I don't know because I think that there is equality for women now more than there ever has been. So I don't know. There's not anything that gets in my way – being a woman – that stops me from doing anything.
> Shelley: Do you think that there is anything else that gets in the way of young women having choices and being able to do whatever they want to do?
> Lucy: Well like how women are perceived. Like men putting them down all the time. Like there's meant to be equality in the workplace but like if you have a baby or something and have to go on pregnancy leave it's a problem. I think as much as equality is a real definite the perception is different. *(Lucy, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

In both of these discussions gender is constructed as involving relations between women and men in which women are discriminated against, particularly in the work place. However, gender is also constructed as being about increased equality so while other women may be limited by their gender, both Jessica and Lucy do not identify themselves with this position but with one in which gender is about women being able to do what they want. This illustrates how discourses and the subject positions within them are simultaneously constituted in multiple and contradictory ways. Gender can be about *both* increased choice and discrimination. It is an identity category which is fluid and structured[17].

Ethnicity

Non-identification with certain discursive positionings was also evident in association with ethnicity. Shayne, a 17 year old from an Asian background positions others but not herself in such a way that being Asian is about being limited in one's choices.

> Shayne: I think that basically coming from an Asian view – I have a couple of Asian friends – and coming from them I think that what really hinders them is their background. Their culture which is really, really backwards I

[17] This tendency is argued in Bradley (1996:7). Her point is that the meanings of social categories which organise social relations can change over time.

> think. It is the way the people think within their communities. They think women are somehow inferior to men so in that case I think that in ethnic minority communities that hinders women.
> Shelley: Do you think anything has limited the choices you've been able to make for yourself?
> Shayne: So far no. So far I think I've done well with that. I've actually always wanted to go on and do A-levels and I've achieved that. I achieved it by passing by all my GCSEs which I was quite pleased with. So far I don't think I've limited myself or hindered myself in any way. *(Shayne, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

Even though Shayne herself is Asian and would likely be discursively positioned in particular ways by others as such she locates herself and her choices outside of the influence of the Asian community. It is other young women, her Asian friends for instance, who she places in the same category - a position characterised by constraint deriving from the expectations associated with their ethnic background but no reference is made here to her own ethnicity. Instead she constructs her own ontological identity by locating herself outside of the relations within the Asian community that limit young women and she also locates herself outside of the relations within the dominant white culture which may operate as a restriction on those who occupy the position of an ethnic minority.

Class

Positioning of the self in relation to others was also performed by drawing upon differences in 'family background' or having access to resources but this occurred less frequently than did locating the self within gender or ethnic relations. In the following excerpt Caroline identifies material inequality and the ways in which this type of inequality reproduces further advantages and disadvantages but she situates herself outside of relations which confer both types of life chances - she is not disadvantaged but does not necessarily identify herself as being privileged either. She does not account for why limitations haven't been a problem for her.

> Shelley: What kinds of things do you think limit the opportunities that young women have today?

Caroline: I don't think they're limited that much. I think your parents have a lot to do with how limited you are because if you're from a poor background or quite well off that affects you because maybe you can't go to college because it does cost quite a bit of money and if your parents are paying...and university especially that is going to limit people in the future I think unless the new government changes it because grants were going to go down by 10 percent and if your parents can't pay then really intelligent people can't afford to go.
Shelley: Do you think anything has limited the choices that you've made for yourself?
Caroline: No. Not really. I've been able to do whatever I want. *(Caroline, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

Although most of the young women did not see themselves as having their opportunities limited by the factors which they believed limited other young women there were several instances when a congruent relation was constructed between the self and the Other. This recognition of unequal positionings within relations of power and privilege was often due to having experienced being positioned by others in such a way thus coming to inhabit these relations in a particular way. All of these young women were able to identify themselves as being positioned such that their choices were effected whether through sexist attitudes in the workplace, by the traditions of their ethnic community or by social class. The following three examples illustrate recognitions of how their lives were organised by social categories and lived social relations within which they were embedded.

Claire: There are some men I don't like at work. You don't really want to hear what the men have been up to that night with their wives and girlfriends and a bit on the side and all this. You don't want to hear that.
Shelley: So they talked about it in that work environment.
Claire: They talked about it all the time. Constantly.
Shelley: That made you feel like it was a place you didn't want to be working in?
Claire: Yeah, I tried to ignore it but it just got to the point where I was chasing after one of them with a spanner telling him to shut up.
Shelley: So sexist attitudes about women?
Claire: Yeah I can't stand that and all these jokes like, 'Why do women have small feet? To get closer to the sink' and all this. I don't find that very amusing. *(Claire, 16 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

Prea: I think it's society not seeing a woman as equal to a man. I think it's hard. You know like with me it's being Asian and everything. I get

society's views and then I get the community's pressures as well. We have some people who think that a girl shouldn't go away from home, go to university. You know live that kind of life. They don't like that. I'm lucky in that way because my parents are quite liberal in that way and they do understand. They look at what I want to do, my dreams and things but then they always think about what other people are going to say. So...
Shelley: So do you feel that sometimes there's conflict?
Prea: Yes definitely. I don't have that same sort of freedom as other people. Sometimes I wish they just didn't worry about what other people say. Just do what they want they do. I know my Mom has regretted a lot of things - things that she wanted to do but didn't because of what things people might say. I don't want to fall into that. *(Prea, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ at Pearson College).*

Shelley: What kind of things do you think limit the opportunities that young women have?
Sara C.: I think I suppose it affects boys as well, but I suppose that if you go for an interview and someone has been to a private school and someone has been to a state school and one girl says I went to this private school and got 10 A stars and the other girls goes in and says I went to this school and didn't get very good grades then I suppose that would affect it but I don't think that's fair really because it shouldn't be like that .
Shelley: So if you've been to a private school you think you're going to have an advantage?
Sara C.: Yeah I think so. *(Sara C., 16 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

Sara, who has attended an all girls' private school since the age of six, provides one of the few instances where the self is recognised as occupying a position of privilege which confers a long term advantage at the expense of others who are less privileged. The ability of young women to recognise how social relations are structured in such a way was generally seen as being quite limited by the practitioners interviewed. Young women were described as being highly individualistic with little appreciation for the extent to which social inequality affected people's lives. This attitude was interpreted by the practitioners as indicative of a historical shift that occurred in 1980s in young people's attitudes from a time when students were politically informed and active to the current moment, which they felt was defined by individualism. This generation of young women were described as 'Thatcher's children' - a term used to summarise the ways that they placed value on independence and the goal of self fulfilment over

collective identifications. As such the practitioners located these young women within a wider historical, social, and political transformation in British society towards more conservative attitudes.

> Mr. Preston: People talk about Thatcher's children and there is some truth in it in that the certain subjects they go for and the jobs they want to do...Certainly for a lot of people of my generation and before will have voted for the Labour party and socialist and therefore anti-capitalist...They think if they want to go work for a big company that's fine. They don't see anything wrong with that. It's a case of getting on in the way you want to do it. It's very much a personal freedom thing. *(Mr. Preston, Head of Sixth Form, Ripley School).*

This tendency towards individualism and the denial of limits due to inequality within social relations was also seen to extend to racial and ethnic difference as well as class and gender. Practitioners stressed how young people in general fail to appreciate how power is inscribed in these relations. This tendency has been theorised as being due in part to the proclivity of dominant categories like whiteness to be lived as neutral rather than as the dominant term in a relation of privilege. Within binary relations it is the unmarked category, the 'norm' that is left unquestioned and, therefore, invisible (Brah, 1996; Frankenberg, 1993). This was true of the young white women in that they didn't recognise their own privileged positioning. Having a 'culture' was seen as something belonging to ethnic or racial minorities.

> Shelley: Does there seem to be any awareness of different racial communities?
> Rose: We try to encourage it. The girls in the classes are predominantly white females. I think they are perhaps quite interested when someone from another culture explains about their culture but that's as far as it gets. *(Rose, tutor, Pearson College).*

Difference and Identity

Sets of relations organised by difference are understood as one of the ways through which choices and opportunities for young women are arranged and ordered. To understand the relationship between difference and the kinds of

identities under production in this study requires a recognition of the dimensions that reside within the relationship between difference and identity. When the practitioners constructed the institutions they work within in terms of specific relations of difference and social division they did so at the macro level of analysis at a level of abstraction where reference is made to patterns of social relations which persist over time and space (social class, gender, ethnicity, and age). When the young women drew upon the same discourses they did so also at the macro level but only in relation to the general subject of 'young women'. At the micro level of their own subjective experience, however, a recognition of the self as this general subject began to fracture. There was a tension between these two levels; the subjective and the social, or the immediate and the abstract. This can be explained by appreciating that identity is about the disjuncture between those discourses which seek to inscribe the subject in certain ways and the ways in which the subject engages in the interpretative practices of identity formation. Identity is about both similarity and difference, correspondence and dissimilarity. It not only involves the ways in which subjects see themselves in the representations available but also how they construct the meaning of those differences and position themselves and others through that understanding (Hetherington, 1998:15). Hall's definition of identity captures the space between these two dimensions:

> I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture,* between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us (1996:5-6).

Taylor's (1998:345) distinction between identity as a social category into which individuals are placed based on the notion of them sharing a position - categorical identity - and identity as one's own uniqueness - ontological identity - is a useful way of understanding how 'difference' operates on multiple levels. On the macro level discourses are about the positioning of the abstract collective subject. For instance the category of 'Woman' as opposed to actual, historical women

whose experiences and, therefore, identities are disbursed across multiple axes of difference such that individual experience and identity are not reducible to the collective experience.

> ...the relationship between personal biography and collective history is complex and contradictory. While personal identities always articulate with the collective experience of a group, the specificity of a person's life experience etched in the daily minutiae of lived social relations produces trajectories that do not simply mirror group experiences (Brah, 1996:124).

Those young women who identified themselves with the position of the collective subject of discourses about gender, ethnicity and class differed from those young women who did not take up this position because they were able to recount experiences through which they came to understand themselves and their relations within these discourses in particular ways. Experience is an important part of identification, not as a foundational category or as the medium through which an essential interiority is expressed, but as a process through which subjectivity is formed. In order to understand how difference is constituted relationally we need to focus on historical processes that, through discourses, subjects become positioned and, thereby, produce their experiences. It is not individuals who *have* experience but subjects who are *constituted through* experience (Scott, 1992:25-26). Experience is that which we seek to interpret and explain using the meanings and categories made available within historically specific contexts. It is through experiences embedded within practices, traditions, rituals, ceremonies and institutional forms that individuals come to recognise themselves as participants in social relations (Taylor, 1998:342) and in this way subjectivity is constructed in a continuous process, an ongoing, constant renewal based on an interaction with the world. It is produced 'not by external ideas, values, or material causes but by one's personal, subjective engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, affect) to the world' (de Lauretis in Alcoff, 1988:423). Our identities are about our own histories – interpretations in which we are both subjects of and subjected to discursive construction.

Experience of difference is a site of contestation and a discursive space where 'different and differential subject positions and subjectivities are inscribed, reiterated, or repudiated' (Brah, 1996:116). To posit that discourses produce experience and, therefore, identities is not a move towards linguistic determination for there is never a perfect 'fit' between the self and the various categories through which we come to understand and construct the self. The unity that identity suggests is not 'an all-inclusiveness sameness, seamless without internal differentiation' (Hall, 1996:4). Rather it is the 'channelling of excess of meaning into a relatively structured form' (Jervis, 1998:325). This excess of meaning interrupts over-determination and in this way difference allows for agency because although subjects are constituted discursively there are conflicts among discursive systems, contradictions within any one of them, and the possibility for the deployment of multiple meanings. Subjects do have agency not as autonomous individuals exercising their free will but, instead, as subjects whose agency arises through situations and statuses accorded them (Scott, 1992:33-34). Identifications are both partial and contingent.

> When we speak of the constitution of individual into subject through multiple fields of signification we are invoking *inscription* and *ascription* as simultaneous processes whereby the subject *acquires* meaning in socio-economic and cultural relations at the same moment as she ascribes meaning by making sense of these relations in everyday life (Brah, 1996:117).

Although Giddens is criticised for privileging unity over difference within his theory of reflexive identities to simply flip the argument around in a deconstruction of this unified subject into multiple selves that through an endless play of difference escape coherence would be a mistake. Pieces, fractures and divisions may well constitute the subject but these fragments do not defy classification or unification into relations based on sameness and identification. There is a need to understand identity not simply as unitary but never-the-less as possessing unity.

> ...we need to understand the way in which, on the one hand, individuals build a sense of coherence through their multiple social identifications, and,

> on the other, the way in which categories of identity act back upon their incumbents, often ascribing ontological characteristics to their members (Taylor, 1998:341).

This makes it possible to talk about concrete identities and subjectivities which are neither completely fragmented or simply unified wholes but as coherent unities embodied in concrete, historically located individuals (Taylor, 1998:340). The point is also made by Brah that difference operates within identity when she points out that identities are marked by the multiplicity of subject positions which constitute the subject such that identity can neither be fixed nor singular but, rather, is a 'constantly changing relational multiplicity' which although is in a state of flux does assume 'specific patterns, as in a kaleidoscope, against particular sets of personal, social and historical circumstances' (Brah, 1996:123).

Conclusion

This analysis has explored how difference organises social relations and how these relations shape some of the institutions within which young women negotiate their identities. I have tried to show that the idea of difference is utilised by individuals in their accounts of how choices are structured and that how one is located within relations of difference shapes and influences life chances - in short, that social inequality is a concept that people employ in their everyday interpretations of the social world. Difference also entered into the accounts given by the young women and specifically how their choices and other young women's choices were limited because of the ways their choices were embedded in various sets of social relations. It is these dynamics that theories of reflexive modernisation undertheorise in asserting that a 'do-it-yourself' biography is rapidly replacing ascribed biographies. However, despite the constraints of ascribed statuses many of the young women in this study exhibited, at the level of ontological identity, a more individualised account of the self. While recognising that the 'Other' was constrained or limited, the autonomy of the self relied upon being different from other young women who face social inequality. This kind of individualism works

to falsely level difference by asserting that inequality doesn't exist or that one is able to do whatever one wants because of the absence of inequality.

In many of these instances the non-recognition of the self as being implicated in such relations which organise social divisions reflects the tendency for a lack of reflexivity to be the privilege of those who have power but not in every case and this was most clearly evident in relation to gender. Gender relations were often constructed as relations of difference and inequality but also as relations which had transformed significantly. The use of such notions of inequality being embedded in social relations and the ways in which these relations transform indicate that there is a high degree of reflexivity at work in these accounts. This could imply that this ability to reflect upon social conditions of existence might support conditions of further transformation. Furthermore, the awareness of changing patterns of gender relations indicated by both practitioners and the young women support the assertion that social relations of industrial society are being remodelled and becoming more fluid - particularly gender relations. This is an important consideration as identity is relative to constantly shifting external contexts suggesting that identifications can transform as the significance of patterns of relations shift.

A useful way to understand the tension between inequality and individualisation is to understand the dynamic between categorical and ontological identity. The statement that 'we are what we make ourselves' is a process which is embedded within practices, representation, social relations, and so forth within specific historical and local contexts. Individualisation is still shaped by patterns of social inequality as apparent within the institutional contexts constructed by practitioners in this study (schools, youth training, workplaces, the family, etc.) where ways in which discursively organised experience produces different identities. Giddens, by emphasising the centrality of choice in this theory of identity, presumes that experiences that come to define the self are chosen but as Scott argues, it is not individuals who *have* experience but subjects who are *constituted through* experience (Scott, 1992:25-26). This is not to say, however,

that identity is over-determined. The young women who do not recognise themselves as the subjects of social inequality are engaged in the process of becoming. Therefore identities are never complete or whole but are in constant movement such that things like gender discrimination or racism might in other contexts or moments come to have a greater impact on the identity they produce. Coherence is a temporary moment, recognitions are fluid and non-recognition is not necessarily mis-recognition[18]. It is possible to understand how certain relations work without that dynamic being one's own location or the most salient aspect of the self. Recognition at the categorical level can enter into the level of the ontological at any time and then shift again making it difficult to privilege any one axis of identity in advance.

In chapter six the effects of processes of differentiation will be considered in relation to the expanding possibilities for constructing oneself in relation to others within the context of intimacy. The idea of having an expanded range of choice of how to organise one's life is explored through a discussion with the young women about their feelings and attitudes towards marriage, child rearing, and domesticity. Specific attention will be given to the ways in which a construction of the self as autonomous produces a series of conflicts and problems for the pursuit of interconnectedness and commitment to an intimate partner. Giddens' concept of the 'pure relationship' will be used to evaluate this discussion. The strategies that were developed will be interpreted as an expression of the 'right to difference' whereby expanding possibilities for lifestyles are indicated by the shifting and fluid patterns of family and intimate lives. This 'right to difference' is about the right to make individual decisions and choices whereby a 'recognition of diversity and a respect for individual differences opens the way for new definitions of autonomy

18 The term 'mis-recognition' implies that the subject fails to realise or understand their 'objective' position suggesting that there is a 'reality' that exists outside of actor's understandings, as for example in explanations utilising the idea of false consciousness. Mis-recognition is not used here because it contributes to a denial of agency. 'Non-recognition', on the other hand, suggests that the subject does not identify with a particular position within a specific set of circumstances. This term does not suggest that a position of inequality is irrelevant but rather that specific positioning is not relevant to the particular situation at hand. This term allows for recognition to be made in other moments, places, and situations.

and authenticity' (Weeks, 1995:142). This is a right which is fundamentally about respecting different ways of being human and recognising the various ways that potentially exist for achieving self-defined ends.

Chapter Six: Intimate Relationships and Individualised Biographies

> I think time has changed everybody's ideas...because when my Mum was young I think everybody thought you go to school, you get married, you have kids, you look after the home and you can have a career but there wasn't as wide choice in what kind of careers or the ways you could carry on your life. I think they were slightly restricted whereas today there doesn't seem to be that straightforward pattern. Everybody seems to be doing it in a different way. There's not as much pressure to have children when you're say twenty. A lot of people now seem to be thinking that they'll have their career first and then later on maybe in their thirties they'll look at having kids because there are choices now. They are slowly becoming more open *(Mel, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

In her description of the increasingly diverse ways of navigating the complex interrelationships between education, careers, marriage, domestic responsibilities and having children Mel has offered a rather compelling evaluation of the state in which relationships are purported to exist within conditions of reflexive modernity (Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernshiem, 1995, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Giddens, 1992). It is generally recognised that the organisation of the private realm and the relations which constitute it have undergone tremendous transformation in the past thirty years but this is a transformation that has yet to be completed and, as such, is still unfolding. Key issues taken as indicators of change include the growth of domestic partnerships and decline in the popularity of marriage; and increases in the rates of divorces, remarriages, step-families, single parenthood, joint custody, abortions and dual career households (Jagger and Wright, 1999:1). Factors such as these have influenced the study of intimacy and family relations leading to a perspective which suggests that family practices are becoming more diverse and fluid (Morgan, 1996; Silva and Smart, 1999)[1]. Some implications

[1] Silva and Smart (1999:1) make the important point that increased diversity in the ways people choose to live their intimate lives can be interpreted in two distinct ways: as either a symptom of moral decline contributing to the end of the conjugal, nuclear family or, more positively, as changes occurring in 'relation to evolving employment patterns, shifting gender relations, and increasing options in sexual orientations'. This latter model views the family as a fluid set of practices and relations which does not remain stable but changes in relation to wider social trends. Shifts in patterns of intimate relations, therefore, are not to be interpreted as signs of moral decline – a position often reflected in conservative

of these transformations that have received attention by social theorists are the increased 'diversity of family practices which need not emphasise the centrality of the conjugal bond, which may not insist on co-residence, and which may not be organised around heterosexuality' (Silva and Smart, 1999:1).

For young women these transformations involve a reflexive engagement with the challenges of incorporating intimate relations[2] into their individualised biographies. In order to do so they must evaluate the models on hand – the biographies their mother's have led for instance – and choose to follow these established paths, reject them, or reconfigure them according to the set of values, goals, and costs deemed most relevant to their own lives. This chapter will look at the ways the young women in this study viewed intimate relationships; the models of intimacy they were constructing for themselves; the conflicts that intimacy produced and the strategies they employed for reconciling the conflicting demands of education, career, marriage, domesticity and child rearing. The choices that young women were making with regards to how they want to live their intimate relationships will be analysed using the concepts of individualisation, detraditionalisation, and pure relationships and the right to difference. The objective is to look at some of the implications of the autonomous self for intimate relationships

---

arguments and right leaning political rhetoric. This point highlights the discrepancy between the family as an ideal type (what it ought to be) and the actualities of how families are organised. Barrett and MacIntosh (1991) also make a distinction between the family as a social and economic institution and the family as an ideology. Jagger and Wright argue that both of these aspects can be distinguished from the empirical realities of individuals and their families (1999:3).

2 Intimate relationships include relationships with friends, family, and partners. The focus in this chapter, however, will be on heterosexual, monogamous relationships and the construction of these relationships. This is not to assume that all of the young women in this study were heterosexual. Nor it the intention to perpetuate the heterosexual nuclear family as a normative ideal as an extension of what Butler's terms 'heterosexual hegemony' (1993). This idea in explored further in Jagger and Wright (1999:10). The discussion with the young women in this study of relationships was restricted to heterosexual relations because no other model of sexuality emerged. None of the young women mentioned homosexuality as an alternative to heterosexual relationships. Although it would seem that the norm of heterosexuality operates to define sexuality as the exclusion of other alternatives, this tendency does not preclude identification with other forms outside the constraints of heteronormativity.

Mapping Out Intimate Arrangements

Although the organisation of intimacy is diversifying in late modernity its significance is not diluting but said to be intensifying. Both the diversifying tendencies and the increased emphasis that people are placing on intimate relationships are connected to processes of detraditionalisation through which traditional guidelines for living one's life become increasingly tenuous. As external references and authorities lose their influence the individual becomes responsible for defining and choosing how to organise their own intimate relationships but because these same set of conditions produce uncertainty the intimate relationship is sought out as a refuge a space within which to explore oneself through mutual self disclosure. In this regard intimacy is becoming a central aspect of identity (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995:51; Roger, 1996:86-87).

Marriage is one form of relationship which has been effected by a transformation in the ways in which people seek out intimacy. Whereas marriage was historically 'first and foremost an institution *sui generis* raised above the individual' there has been a shift toward it becoming a product constructed by those involved (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1996:33). Central to this reconstruction is the questioning of forms which were once taken for granted because 'it is no longer possible to pronounce in some binding way what family, marriage, parenthood, sexuality or love mean, what they should or could be; rather these vary in substance, exceptions norms and morality from individual to individual and from relationship to relationship' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995:5).

As Mel, in the quote above points out, there are now more choices open to young women and a general openness to charting one's own course. Her description reflects the theoretical contention that new family practices are emerging as the influence of dominant models diminish along with rigid, pre-given paths of living (Silva and Smart, 1999:4). As Morgan (1996) suggests individuals no longer passively accept pre-given models and family structures but are actively

creating new ways of 'doing' family relations and routines. All of the young women in this study identified the extent to which the conditions under which they were having to confront decisions about their lives had changed in comparison to the situation their mothers had faced when they were a similar age. When asked if they thought their life would be different from their mother's life, the overwhelming majority agreed it would be and this was primarily attributed to the different ways education, careers, marriage, child rearing and parenting would have a bearing on their lives. It was within these areas, the traditional split between public and private spheres, that they felt the most dissonance with the life their mother had lived. Stress was often placed upon the life she had *been able* to live rather than the *choices* she had made. Indeed it was the very lack of choice open to their mothers that the young women commented upon – a lack of choice and options which had significantly constrained their mothers but that they felt contrasted sharply to their own level of access to opportunities. In this regard the model lived by their mothers was seen as constituting the most traditional form of negotiating intimacy described by the young women. The characteristics of such a model included limited choices, self-sacrifice, regret, and dependence on a male partner. It is not surprising, therefore, that almost all of the young women rejected the notion that they might follow the same path.

> Lauren: My Mum was twenty two when she had me. She was married to my Dad and they'd been together since she was fifteen and all that kind of school romance stuff and she's always been a housewife and tied down and she wishes she hadn't done that. She's never been bothered about travelling and I am...My Mum is very family oriented whereas for me it's like 'I live here and here and here and this is where I venture'. So I think our lives are completely different. *(Lauren, 19 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

> Prea: My Mum does everything in the house. She manages everything and I don't know how she does it. She does the cleaning, she works, she manages the finances and everything. I mean she never, ever questions my Dad. She will not say a thing. I tell her to say something but I won't do it because I'm scared of him. She has not once stood up for herself ever and I wish that she would. *(Prea, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Caroline: My Mum and Dad they've got a relationship where they're partners in business but my Mum does everything at home like cooks and

> things like that and they don't do things together like I would in a relationship. They're very happy with how they are because it has been like that from the beginning but I wouldn't want to be like that. I want to be in a equal relationship and do a lot of things together...*(Caroline, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

These young woman expected to be able to insist on having equality within their relationships. Unlike their mothers they asserted that they will have a greater degree of freedom to live their lives as they want not only within the context of their relationships but also with regard to the effect their intimate relationships will have on the choices they make in other areas of their lives. The emphasis they placed on equality reflects the way in which women's biographies have become more individualised as ascribed gender roles have transformed in late modernity. Beck (1992:110-111) argues that women have been freed from the traditional traits ascribed by femininity and locates five conditions which have led to shifts in the structure of women's biographies. These include increasing life expectancy which constitutes a 'demographic liberation' from the role of childbearing and rearing; the deskilling of housework which has directed women outside the home in search of fulfilling work; availability of contraception supporting 'intentional' motherhood; growing divorce rates which translate into a condition *where women cannot* necessarily rely upon a husband for financial support; and, finally, the equalisation of education opportunity 'which is among other things also the expression of a strong *career* motivation' (Beck, 1992:111). This transformation of women's roles, however, produces a series of conflicts and contradictions which may have a destabilising effect on intimate relationships. What Beck terms the 'individualisation spiral' labour market, education, mobility, career planning – has a pronounced effect on the family as the family becomes a 'continuous juggling act with divergent multiple ambitions involving careers and their requirements for mobility, educational constraints, conflicting obligations to children and the monotony of housework' (ibid.).

> The new factor altering love and marriage is not that somebody – meaning the man – has become more himself, more individual in the course of modern times...What is new is the individual *female* biography, freeing the woman of family duties, and sending her out into the world with an impetus which has been increasing since the 1960s...as long as it was only the man

> who developed his potential and the woman was complementarily obliged to look after him and the others, family cohesion remained more or less intact at the cost of her own interests or personality (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995:61).

The young women interviewed were aware that they will not have to be confined to the role of housewife, that they can demand equality within their relationships and that they enjoy a significantly greater scope of freedom to decide how these relationships will fit into to their life trajectories than women have had previously. However, given that they have the option of rejecting the traditional routes that their mothers were more compelled to follow, what alternatives were they formulating as potential replacements? The constructions emerged according to four different patterns: traditional, deferred traditional, negotiated, and non-traditional[3].

Traditional

The traditional pattern is most closely aligned with the expectations of traditional femininity[4]. This model was taken up by only a small minority of the young women but there were a few for whom aspects of it seemed appealing. Jessica, for instance expressed frustration at how long it will likely take to arrive at her goal of having a home, a marriage and children.

> Jessica: It quite worries me actually because I always sort of think when am I ever going to? [get married] If you have to go through all these 6 or 7 year relationships before you do get married then what age am I going to get

3 These models, like the construction of the 'nuclear, heterosexual family', constitute ideal types which in practice may overlap with other models and do not necessarily translate directly into ways in which people their lives. For purposes of analysis this scheme indicates how the young women were constructing ways of practising intimacy rather than accepting pre-given models. The expression of diverse models for practising intimacy, however, supports Cheal's claim that since the 1970s in most western countries processes that contributed to the standardisation of the family life cycle have either stopped or reversed and as a result there is now an increasing proportion of household configurations that depart from the normative pattern of family life (Cheal. 1991:124).

4 More specifically the expectation that women perform the duties of housewife while the man acts the main wage earning head of household. See discussion in Jamieson (1998:138-57).

> married at? (laughs). But I do want to get married. I have my image of the perfect marriage with the perfect little house, and little kids and I've always wanted to do that. I mean if it were up to me now, I could happily drop everything. *(Jessica, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

Sarah was also willing to accept marriage and domesticity because she saw this as a viable alternative to having a career. She admitted that having a career, a marriage, and children would be difficult but only for women who want to be 'really successful' outside the domestic sphere. These women, she argued, shouldn't have children because they are too busy to spend enough time with them. Specifically, she identified the 'high flyer' type of woman as such a person, which she herself was not 'bothered to be'.

> Sarah: I'm not bothered when I get married and have kids to be the one who goes out to work. I'd rather just take a back seat and just look after them - put them first because I'll be sharing my life with someone. It won't just be me all the time. There'll be a husband and children first so in that way my life will change - not putting myself first. *(Sarah, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

Comments such as these support the construction of women's paid labour as being more a case of personal indulgence; as nonessential to the maintenance of the household but rather as a matter of individual satisfaction. One effect of this attitude is the reinforcement of traditional stereotypes which tie men, as earners to the public realm, and women, as unpaid housewives to the domestic realm. Furthermore, this attitude suggests that for women, working outside the home is perceived as a choice that can be rejected.

Deferred Traditional

In this model most of the traditional aspects of women's domestic role are retained getting married, having children, staying at home to care for children, and sacrificing one's career but rather than heading straight into this arrangement before age twenty, as many of their mothers had done, the young women who

adopted this model expressed a determination to defer it to some point in the future when they would be prepared to choose to enter into it.

> Lynn: I mean ideally I would like to get that ideal family concept. You know, husband, kids, husband coming home for tea but not until I've done what I want to do because if I get married and have kids I'm going to think back, "Oh I wish I would have done that". So I want to do things then if I want to then settle down *(Lynn, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Shayne: Oh yeah. I think I will get married. I mean I can't see myself having dozens of children but 2 would be nice. A part of me thinks marriage, nice husband, nice home, respectable life but part of me thinks career woman and I'll be successful. I think I could have a bit of both. I think if I knew I was going to married later on as long as I'd done what I want before getting married. If I'd done a law degree and practised for a year or so and am happy with that. Even if I married into a family where I liked the guy but he was slightly strict I think because I'd done what I wanted to do with my life, I could sacrifice further for them. If I hadn't the opportunity to do that already I wouldn't stand for it. *(Sasha, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Ripley School).*

The main feature of this model is having one's own life first before making the sacrifices they thought would be inherent in committing to a partner and having a family. There was a perception of an almost inevitable loss of one's autonomy in the way this model was constructed. Being able to pursue education and career goals, to enjoy independence and to establish an identity were held up as important objectives but ones that had to be achieved prior to accepting the constraints of domesticity and intimate commitment. As such the life trajectories for these young women were defined by two separate phases: on defined by autonomy and the other defined by sacrifice. For example, Mel, a 16 year old sixth form student at Greenwood School, explained that she did want to eventually have children but not straight after marriage as she would want to 'establish me as a person and not as a mother or somebody who is related to another person'. The value of autonomy and the need to preserve it as long as possible were the primary reasons for devising deferral of commitment to a relationship as a strategy for incorporating an intimate relationship into their life trajectory.

Negotiated Traditional

The negotiated model of intimacy follows this same logic – the need to establish one's own identity prior to commitment; however, in this model making the commitment to marriage and having children was not seen as irreconcilable with maintaining autonomy and independence. Instead it emerged that these young women perceived an inherent conflict between the workplace and the domestic realm, and between asserting their own desires and managing the expectations of others. Working through these conflicts would, they believed, necessitate a number of negotiation strategies. Generally the young women who adopted this model were attempting to reconfigure the traditional model in order to arrive at a compromise that would maximise the satisfaction that could be derived from being both in a committed relationship and having one's own separate existence. In these cases the young women expressed a determination to avoid the potentially negative or constraining consequences of domesticity.

> Shelley: Do you see yourself getting married?
> Nikky: Yeah but I don't want to just stop things because I get married. I want to carry on doing what I want to do but getting married isn't going to stop me. It's just another thing that I want to do. *(Nikky, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

Here marriage is constructed as potentially limiting to one's range of opportunities but unlike in the deferred traditional model, where constraint is perceived as almost inevitable, there is the expectation of being able to resist and negotiate these constraints. One of most frequently cited problems that would have to be resolved was the performance of domestic roles. As Joanne explained she doesn't mind who does what around the house as 'long as he does his share and doesn't leave it all to me like if I'm cooking and cleaning then he can look after the children or when he was cooking then I'd take care of them'. Very few of the young women assumed that equality within the domestic realm could be taken for granted but that they would have to work to ensure it. When it was suggested to Sasha that her husband might expect to her stay at home she worked out a strategy in her narrative to combat this possibility.

> Sasha: I'd go, 'I'll pretend I didn't hear that!'... I'd educate him before we had children about stuff like that. I mean you forget don't you? Like if I said to him on the wedding night, 'Listen when we have children this or that', he'd probably forget by the time we had them. I said to my sister, 'You have got to get it written down. Get him to sign it!'. She said, 'It doesn't seem like marriage then. It seems like a contract'. That's how it's got to be sort of thing but I think it depends...hopefully my husband isn't that narrow minded and I wouldn't stand for it. *(Sasha, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

Compared to the other models this model of intimacy must accommodate a considerable level of ambivalence regarding how the conflicting demands of maintaining one's own identity and entering into a shared commitment with an intimate partner can be reconciled but overall, it was the model most often adopted. What these young women are identifying are the inherent contradictions of traditional forms of intimacy and the problems that individualisation processes produce for the goals of connecting with another person while preserving self autonomy. The conflicts which must be continually managed by the individuals involved can be linked to contradictions inherent in processes of modernisation. Modern industrial society is premised upon the opposition between wage labour and household labour and the corresponding ascription of male and female roles. In so far as industrial society depends upon the separation of these roles it is also dependant upon gender inequality, however, these inequalities violate principles of modernity[5] and as modernisation proceeds, become increasingly problematic (Beck, 1992:104). As ascribed gender roles dissolve, along with their constraining influence, biographies become ever more individualised with the implication for intimate relationships that two 'labour market' biographies must be accommodated. Problems arise specifically within the domestic realm because the traditional organisation of the family presumes gendered inequality inscribed in different gender roles. One of the many questions that must be asked is how to find a

---

5 Beck (1992:14) argues that industrial society rests upon a contradiction between the universal principles of modernity – civil rights, equality, functional differentiation, methods of scepticism – and the structure of its institutions in which these principles can only be realised on a partial and selective basis with the consequence that industrial society

balance between autonomy, the pursuit of one's own goals and the desire of making a commitment to another person who is also equally engaged in constructing an individualised biography.

> ...what appears to be an individual failure, mostly the fault of the female partner, is actually the failure of a family model which can mesh *one* labour market biography with a lifelong housework biography, but not *two* labour market biographies, since their inner logic demands that both partners have to put themselves first. Interlinking two such centrifugal biographies is a feat, a perilous balancing act, which was never expected so widely of previous generations but will be demanded of all coming ones as more and more women strive to emancipate themselves (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995:6).

A further contradiction to be managed is the discrepancy between a growing consciousness of gender equality and the resilience of structured gender inequality; the gap between female expectations and the reality of unequal distribution of rewards and opportunities. In the increased range of choices regarding how to live one's life it becomes apparent that there are divergent choices available to men and women and that in navigating these there are also different consequences for men and for women.

> ...although the family, both as an institution and in practice, may sustain gender-based inequalities, it is often also the main source of love, identity and succour for many women. This means that addressing gender-based inequalities in heterosexual family relationships, and the sexual division of labour from which they spring, involves changing prevalent understandings of femininity and masculinity and the construction of gender identities (Jagger and Wright, 1999:5).

In the post world war two period, not only have traditional gender roles destabilised but also the distinction between public and private spheres[6]. These two

---

destabilises itself through its very establishment – 'continuity becomes the "cause" of discontinuity' (Beck, 1992:14).

6 The tendency in sociological analysis has been to perpetuate the distinction between work and home within industrial society (Morgan, 1996:15). However, the distinction between the gendered spheres of public and private, work and family, or employment and household is a somewhat false one. As argued by Silva and Smart (1999:7) 'only recently has mainstream sociological analysis of family life and intimacy begun to reject the traditional presumption that the family is an institution which is separate from other social

realms, while often treated as distinct, in fact are implicated such that transformations within one realm have implications for the other. As an example of this relation changes that have occurred in the organisation of the nature of work can be associated with changes in the organisation of the family. Three main shifts in employment have been identified by Crompton et. al. (1996:37): the shift to a service economy; the impact of technological changes and information technologies; and the decline of the male breadwinner or single earner model of employment and household (quoted in Jagger and Wright, 1999:8).

This destabilisation means that daily life becomes infused with questions about roles and responsibilities including domestic tasks - who does the washing up to more complex conflicts like issues surrounding mobility and personal career sacrifices in the case where one partner may want to move to another geographical location to take up an employment opportunity. The model of negotiated traditions constructed by most of the young women in this study highlights the dynamics of individualised biographies and their recognition of the contradictions that remain in the organisation of female and male biographies and the traditional location of these biographies in two different spheres.

Some evidence indicates that these young women are quite right to expect that equality will have to be negotiated in their personal relationships rather than be taken for granted. In a review of several studies that have looked at the extent to which married or cohabiting couples have moved away from the traditional arrangement of man-as-breadwinner/head of household and woman-as-housewife-domestic-servant towards more egalitarian and symmetrical partnerships, it is apparent that much progress is still required in order that equality be established. As an indicator of equality the most studied factor has been how domestic work is divided up by couples and how their total income is distributed. The findings suggest that 'heterosexual coupledom remains surprisingly organised around man-as-the-main-earner and woman-as-domestic-worker/carer despite the prevalence of

---

institutions'. For a discussion of the private/public division within modernity see Cheal (1991:81-118).

dual-earner households' (Jamieson, 1998:137). While equality may be a conscious goal of both partners there remains much evidence to support that many couples continue to reproduce gendered inequality through a division of labour which finds women performing the majority of the household chores. The resilience of these patterns is evident in the ways that justifications and explanations were produced by many couples to account for the fact they their relationship was not as egalitarian as they might have claimed. Although this traditional model may be destabilising in late modernity an unequal gendered division of labour seems to provide much potential for conflict and negotiation.

Non-traditional Alternatives

The final model that emerged as an alternative to these others was one in which the conventions of marriage and domesticity were most outwardly challenged and replaced with distinctly different models. These reconfigurations suggest that traditional forms of intimacy are not taken for granted but challenged and, therefore, seem less like 'facts' and more like a matter of individual preference as private lives become increasingly open to questioning with the concomitant need for the invention of solutions to newly emerging challenges (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995:35). In the least extreme form this often involved the perceived desirability of living together as an alternative to getting married. As in the other models, the goal was to find a partner to share one's life with but on a different set of terms originating from within the relationship and not from the imposition of external conventions. These types of relationships are most closely aligned with what Giddens argues is an emergent form of intimacy in late modernity – the pure relationship. The legitimacy of these relationships relies less upon external validation and more upon what the individuals involved perceive as desirable.

> Georgia: I see myself with somebody. I'm not sure about the ring on the finger but I see myself living with someone and acting like a married couple. I'm not sure that I really see the point in marriage because you're going to be together, living together and I don't know if you need a ring and 10,000 pound debt or whatever it costs now to get married just to say that you love him or that you're going to be with him so I don't know if I am

> going to get married but I see myself in a relationship. *(Georgia, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Shannon: You can show just as much commitment to a person living with them as you do getting married but it's just people's views that you should get married. Like my Mum says, 'Oh you have to get married!', and I say, 'Why Mum?'. It's just to make them feel better really, your getting married but at the end of the day you don't have to anymore. *(Shannon, 19 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

Both of these young women challenge the notion of a legitimate relationship as one which necessarily culminates in a formal marriage. However, it could be argued that this strategy only minimally undermines traditional forms as it still to some extent approximates the characteristics of conventional marriage. Anna, on the other hand, proposes quite a radically different option derived from a critical assessment of societal expectations. Anna's ideal, however, was far from typical.

> Anna: I don't think that I will get married but I might live with someone. I don't think that I will have children of my own. I'll probably adopt. I just want to live a kind of family that isn't – well, that's more like a commune I suppose where people are individual but just living together and just sharing their lives where there's no set roles...I really hate any kind of restrictions...and when it comes down to it you've been gunning for Oxford or whatever and the school is trying to channel you into doing this and you wake up one day and think, 'I'm not happy and I don't want to do this and this is my life and why the hell am I doing this just because society is telling me I have to do it?' *(Anna, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

One further example of a non-traditional construction of intimacy was offered by Brenda, a nineteen year old who has a sixteen month old daughter. In many ways Brenda's narrative fits the traditional mould: she has had a baby at a young age, she is living with her boyfriend (the baby's father), their goal is to buy their own home and get married. What makes her narrative unique is how marriage is structured into it in a reversal of the traditional order of life events. Marriage, while part of the picture she constructs in her narrative, is incorporated as an endpoint rather than as a beginning. It is the event that will eventually be appropriate for her once she has secured a career, a home and 'everything that she

wants to do with her life'. In contrast the model of deferred tradition involves getting married as a deferred event which then sets into motion a sequence of events mainly having children, leaving full-time employment and making self sacrifices for the sake of one's family. For Brenda, who wants many of these same things i.e. a committed relationship, a child, a home - the necessity of entering into a marriage first in order to have these things is not perceived as a requirement. For Brenda, marriage is something that she considers to be necessary not so much for her and her partner but perhaps for their little girl. There is also a hesitancy about marriage derived from the knowledge that relationships break down.

> Shelley: Do you see yourself getting married?
> Brenda: I'd like to but not for me but for my little girl. So she's got a married Mum and Dad maybe.
> Shelley: When is a good age for you to get married?
> Brenda: When I've got my career and I've got my house and I've got everything that I want then I'll do it.
> Shelley: Why would you wait?
> Brenda: Because I want those things before I get married. I suppose with the situation I'm in now with my boyfriend is near enough to marriage because we've got a little girl and we're doing the things we want to do but I think it's taking that step into marriage. That document where you've got to if you want to separate go through a divorce and everything and it's a real proper commitment. I'd rather do it when I've got everything that I want to do in life. *(Brenda, 19 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

In summary, the four models of intimacy mapped out here indicate that to a certain extent destandardisation of intimate relationships is taking place whereby the freedoms open to individuals results in an expansion of a sense of individuality and personal autonomy (Cheal, 1991:133). In so far as the young women interviewed were able to construct for themselves ways of negotiating relationships while preserving their individual identity serves as an indication of how a greater degree of choice is available to them compared to their own mothers. However, the models that were constructed do not support the suggestion that traditions have disappeared altogether. Rather it is the case that continuity resides alongside diversity in intimate relations and family life (Silva and Smart, 1999:4).

'Post-Coupledom'?

These findings suggest that intimate relationships were an important aspect of the narratives these young women were constructing. Whether through an acceptance of traditional relationship arrangements or via a critical reconfiguration of those traditions these young women did see themselves as entering into some form of commitment with a partner at some point in their future. In one respect this acceptance of forming a committed, monogamous relationship as an ultimate goal undermines suggestions that increasing numbers of young people are choosing to be single - a form of lifestyle which is said to becoming increasingly attractive to young people (Heath, 1999:554). Opting out of 'coupledom' would also constitute one way of negotiating intimacy in late modernity and although this alternative was not taken up as a long term strategy by the young women in this study, the idea of being single in the short term was often seen as both an acceptable and appealing choice to make. Indeed, to construct being single as a choice is significant because one of the strongest connotations of being single is that it is not a choice but rather an unfortunate position in which one finds oneself as a result of a relationship breakdown or simply the inability to find a suitable partner – in short, an undesirable state which one would not choose.

Attitudes towards being single emerged in discussions regarding a fictional scenario describing a young woman's dilemma about a troubled relationship with her boyfriend[7]. The responses to this situation were nearly equally split between advising to end the relationship on one hand, and on the other, to first attempt a negotiation with him before breaking it off[8]. The choice to be single was seen as a viable solution to the dilemma because of the independence it would allow the young woman to embrace. The value of this independence was measured against

[7] The scenario presented was as follows: Sarah currently has a boyfriend that she has been with for the past eight months. She spends most of her spare time with him. They have been fighting a lot lately because he always decides what they're going to do when they go out. Her friends tell her to just break it off. They say she is just insecure. Sarah admits that she isn't totally happy but she has always had a boyfriend and doubts if she really would be happier on her own. What should she do?

the degree of 'hassle' and constraint that was perceived to characterise relationships with men. In the following example Lynn doesn't reject the idea of being in a relationship but points out that staying in a relationship can often be due to social pressure and that underlying this pressure is the inability for many people to understand being single as a 'choice'.

> Lynn: I think that if she isn't entirely happy she should look at why she isn't happy and if she can't get rid of what's making her unhappy, like his attitudes won't change, then she should get rid of him and she should have someone positive in her life. If they can't even decide where they're going out then God! You know what I mean? You're supposed to give and take in a relationship and I think she may be insecure but she'll be able to cope on her own definitely because once you get out of the routine of being in a relationship then you realise that it may be socially acceptable to have a boyfriend but without one you can get rid of the pressure. Like with me I always get asked, 'Don't you have a boyfriend?', and I say, 'No'. 'Well, why not'? 'Because I don't want one'. When you're at a point in your life when you don't want one some people find that very hard to grasp. *(Lynn, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Claire: I like being single because I do what I want to do. I don't have to ask permission to do it which is what I had to do with my ex-boyfriend. I'd phone him up and say do you mind not coming down tonight? I fancy going out with my mates. And he'd argue with me then I'd say okay come down if you want but I won't be in. *(Claire, 16 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

It was in the discussion of this relationship scenario that the value of achieving and preserving one's independence was asserted and reconfirmed. This issue was at the heart of the dilemma – how to be in a relationship without losing one's identity and autonomy. Preservation of an independent identity was pursued through a variety of strategies which had their efficacy in that they served to decentralise the importance of the relationship. While it was perceived that maintaining the relationship was an acceptable goal it was often suggested that it would be best for the young woman involved to focus on other aspects of her life so as to limit the impact the relationship with her boyfriend would have on her. This involved shifting her focus to other kinds of intimate relationships like friendships

---

8 Seventeen of the young women advised negotiating with him as the first strategy while

'because boyfriends come and go but friends are always there'. Spending less time with him, therefore, and concentrating on friendships instead was seen as a way to explore and assert one's self reliance.

> Lucy: The thing I don't like about relationships is having to answer to someone else and always seeing what they're going to do. Boyfriends always have this problem with me because my friends have always been more important to me than they are. They say choose your friends or me and it's always been my friends. *(Lucy, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

> Emilia: I think sometimes [being in a relationship] you can neglect your friends which is stupid especially at my age because it shouldn't be what all your attention is focused on. It should be friends, developing your own personality, doing well in school. *(Emilia, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

> Lianne: I just finished with my boyfriend about 3 days ago. It was my decision. I just didn't want to go out with him anymore. I just want to concentrate on getting a job and things, have some fun and freedom and spend time with my friends and family. *(Lianne, 16 years olds, Careers Guidance Centre).*

One of the ways that intimacy can said to be transforming then is in the questioning of the desirability of entering into a committed relationship at all. This idea, expressed here by the young women, is beginning to emerge in popular culture in the representations of, and arguably, the idealisation of single lifestyles. The 'New Singletons' that is people in their twenties and thirties who live alone and choose to not get involved in a relationship have been interpreted as indicative of the beginning of a vast social change in which marriage and commitment are no longer held as the ideal[9]. In a newspaper article about 'post-couple' Britain, it is single women who are held as the future, a future in which there will be more single-person households than any other kind (Rayner, 2000:1). This is attributed to increased affluence, lower rates of marriage and the rise in relationship break ups. In this article single lifestyles are constructed as an ideal in which people

---

sixteen advocated breaking it off.

9 In relation to debates regarding the declining significance of the family Morgan makes the point that the single-person household is one of the most rapidly growing household types which he defines as being a key feature associated with late modernity (1996:197).

consciously choose to steer clear of emotional commitments, avoid parenthood and instead, commit to being alone. Speculation is made that this new attitude will have vast transformative implications particularly for consumption and lifestyle patterns. While choosing to be single was employed as a strategy for negotiating and resolving problematic romantic relationships by these young women these findings do not necessarily support the contention that more young women will ultimately choose 'singledom' as a long term lifestyle. The value of choosing to be single in this study was primarily a short term strategy – the value of which was to be found in the independence it allowed, however, as discussed earlier, all of the young women in the long term perceived themselves becoming involved in some form of committed, intimate arrangement.

Negotiations: Equality and Communication

The relationship scenario was interpreted as being not only about the importance of autonomy but also equality. While simply leaving the relationship was one way of resolving the conflict just over half of the young women advocated embarking on a process of negotiation with the boyfriend in order to establish equality within the relationship. Like in the negotiated traditional model discussed earlier, tactics of compromise, bargaining, and mutual concessions were suggested as the best way to secure both individualism *and* partnership. It was often the case that intimate relationships were perceived as the site of conflict and a space within which male dominance had to be resisted. This is interesting because while the young women tended to assert that women were gaining more power and equality in general, relationships were often seen as one area in which men still resisted treating women as their equals thus the need for ongoing assertion of one's self identity. Lauren's comments highlight the tension perceived to be at the heart of intimate relationships, a tension created by male dominance.

> Lauren: They run you down so much you feel like you can't get anyone else so you have to cling onto this person. They make you feel that they are the only person in the world that will ever care about you, will ever think that you are pretty. So if someone tells you something often enough you will believe it. So he's probably telling her, 'you won't get anyone else' blah,

> blah blah so she thinks she won't and she has to stay with him but it's just his way of making sure she doesn't leave him...*(Lauren, 19 years old, Careers Guidance).*

It was more unusual for the young women to declare that equality within intimacy was just as important to young men. Anna's comments for example were in the minority in that she insisted that young men's attitudes towards female autonomy have transformed into being regarded as a positive asset to the relationship.

> Anna: I think a lot of boys find it [feminism] attractive actually because it's something to which they can relate. I think that most boys don't like having a relationship with someone they can't talk to. That may be just the boys I associate with but I think in the long run if someone is actually going to be your partner, given the way society is now, there is much more the idea that you have a relationship that is emotional and that you're talking...Now it seems you have to spend more time as a couple and going out together and doing things as a couple as opposed to being man and wife. You tend to be more equal. *(Anna, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

Although Anna's comments are unusual because she asserts that young men are attracted to 'feminists' her comments do reflect a perception shared by many of the young women that a central part of being in a relationship is engaging in mutual disclosure of emotions and being able to express oneself. Negotiation and compromise were viewed as inherent aspects of a successful relationship and as such, being able to talk to your partner and develop open lines of communication. This construction of intimacy is indicative of what Giddens terms 'confluent love' - the central feature being the presumption of equality in emotional give and take. This form of intimacy is dependent upon the extent to which each partner is willing to reveal themselves, their feelings, needs and concerns, and make themselves vulnerable to the other.

> Mel: I think Sarah should speak to her boyfriend and come out plainly with what she thinks and if there is a basis for the relationship then the boyfriend will listen and see if they can come to some compromise...*(Mel, 16 years old, completing lower sixth form, Greenwood School).*

> Lianne: Trust and communication are important. If you can't trust someone then I don't see the point at all. You've got to be able to talk. If you don't want to see him one night then say, 'I'm going out with my friends'. You can trust him and he can trust you and that just makes you appreciate each other and not seeing each other all the time, every day. *(Lianne, 16 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

In these examples the young women are advocating open communication as a strategy for being in the relationship but also retaining their individuality and autonomy[10]. The form of intimacy suggested here is inherent to Giddens' pure relationship. It is a form of intimacy which depends upon ongoing negotiation and communication because it is a relationship organised according to internally referential logic. The lack of external reference points such as familial obligations, kinship ties, social roles and duties means that the relationship is freely chosen and in order for it to survive the conflicts and contradictions accentuated by processes of individualisation a constant appraisal of its internal dynamic is necessary. This entails a commitment on the part of both individuals to developing and maintaining the quality of the relationship. As the relationship may be as freely exited as it is entered it cannot be taken for granted but must be worked at by both partners through mutual trust and disclosure. Commitment means a willingness to do this work but only until the rewards and satisfactions are no longer delivered or deemed adequate. Thus 'the possibility of dissolution...forms part of the very horizon of commitment' and the relationship is acknowledged as only 'good until further notice' (Giddens, 1991:187).

One of the central challenges characteristic of the pure relationship, Giddens argues, is the contradiction posed by the need for commitment to sustain the relationship, on the one hand, and, on the other, the knowledge that relationships are far from durable. Some kind of guarantee that the relationship will last for an indefinite period must be provided to one's partner, however, where marriage was

---

10 Roger (1996:69) suggests that in the post-war period marriage shifted from an 'institutional' form to a 'companionate' form in which marriage came to be seen as being about personal and emotional relations rather than economic calculation and property. This form, he argues, is more difficult to manage because it raises issues about self-

once taken for granted to be a life long commitment or a 'natural condition', inherent in pure relationships is the fact that the relationship can be terminated, more or less at will, by either partner at any particular point[11]. The paradox is that commitment is necessary for the relationship to last but 'anyone who commits herself without reservations risks great hurt in the future, should the relationship become dissolved' (Giddens, 1992:137).

While the value and, indeed, the desirability of negotiating a intimate relationship were upheld by these young women this attitude was often expressed in the face of knowing that relationships are not necessarily forever. This was apparent in the narrative of 19 year old single mother, Joanne, who is ambivalent about the prospects of marriage being able to offer her the security she feels she needs not only because of the break down of her previous two relationships[12] but also because of the impact the divorce of her own parents has had. She would like to believe that marriage would be a positive thing for both her and her son Jason but sees it as also potentially a risk because of the damage that occurs when relationships don't last. However, her comments also highlight something that Giddens overlooks in his analysis of the 'pure relationship' – that investment in a relationship is not only about how it serves the interests of each individual but that there are also another category of persons whose interests are very much at stake but who do not command the resources or autonomy to protect themselves from the end of a pure relationship[13].

---

fulfilment. The friction characterising these relations is also contributed to by the rise of the emancipatory impulse of women.

11 The transformation of the position of women within the labour market is of particular relevance in regard to this point. For instance women's social and economic status has become less dependent on the status of her husband. Silva and Smart (1999:6) argue that as more women come to appreciate this and achieve more secure routes to a decent standard of living than marriage can provide marriage and intimacy will destabilise. If a marriage did not provide the expected satisfactions in terms of identity, affection, sexuality, then a woman could leave the marriage but her standard of living would likely not be lost.

12 The first of these relationships was with the father of her two year old son but also her recent boyfriend (Wayne) with whom she was expecting a baby that was miscarried.

13 For a critique of Giddens on this point see Bauman,(1993:336) and Smart and Neale (1999).

> Joanne: Jason would have a brother or sister and someone would be there for me and Jason. It does scare me a bit though. When I met Wayne it was like, 'I want to marry you', but now I don't know. I think I'm scared to. I don't know. Like my Mum and Dad getting divorced. I was ten when they got divorced so my brother was younger and he got all the attention and I was left to deal with it on my own...I'd live with someone and probably get engaged and maybe in years and years and years I could maybe get married but I want to make sure it's right because I don't want to put Jason through what I had to go through. *(Joanne, 19 years old, Youthworks programme).*

Of the thirty-three young women interviewed, four had children. This was a significant influence on the way in which they constructed intimacy. Their relationship to intimacy was mediated by their relationship to their children where intimate relationships were evaluated not just in terms of their impact on themselves as individuals but also with an emphasis of their potential impact on their children. In this regard, the reflexivity in operation here is not about evaluating what is in one's own best interest but in the interest of both the self and the child in question.

These findings support the notion that in late modernity intimate life is undergoing a restructuring. This impression was also evident in the ways in which the practitioners spoke about the tensions inherent in the conditions under which young women were negotiating their choices. The main source of the confusion and conflict that young women were seen to be experiencing was attributed to the clash between domesticity and careers. According to Mr. Preston, head of sixth form at Ripley School, young women were ambivalent about how to fit partners and children into their other goals such as pursuing careers and individual achievement. In his words, 'they don't want to get married like Mum and Dad but on the other hand if they meet someone nice they would like to stay with them'. These comments suggest a lack of alternative models, an unavailability which leaves them to navigate a course on their own. Mrs. Conway, head of Greenwood school suggested one alternative is the rejection of husbands and marriage altogether. Whereas there was a time when young women asserted that they 'would have it all' careers, families, houschusbands – she said young women are now rejecting that for something altogether different.

> Mrs. Conway: They don't want to be superwoman...What's now emerging is that you can have your career and indeed you should have your career and you can have a designer child. Forget the husband and family bit, which I find absolutely amazing. When you talk to the sixth formers about what they want, they want a child but they don't want a husband. They want a career and one child actually. It will be theirs and theirs alone. They seem to think that won't bring the responsibility of family with it. That that's easier to manage.

Mrs. Conway's assessment is echoed by the analysis made by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim where they argue that as intimate relationships become less durable people seek to find ways of being close to someone else – this someone often being a child. Whereas once men and women turned to each other to find themselves and make love the centre of their existence,

> We have now reached the next stage; traditional bonds play only a minor role and the love between men and women has likewise proved vulnerable and prone to failure. What remains is the child. It promises a tie which is more elemental, profound and durable than any other in this society. The more other relationships become interchangeable and revocable, the more a child can become the focus of new hopes – it is the ultimate guarantee of permanence, providing an anchor for one's life (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995:72-73).

The tutors at Pearson College made similar assessments of the ambivalence young women have towards marriage and family. It was their perception that no longer do young women think of their education and training as a means of pursuing a career to 'tide them over until they get married and have children' but they are beginning to question the assumption that they will get married at all. As Rose, tutor on the GNVQ in Health and Social Care explained many of the young women expressed the desire to have children but to wait until they were in their mid-thirties and that this wouldn't necessarily be seen to take place within the context of a marriage but she qualified her comments by saying that the young women were adamant about marriage and children not being a priority.

Conclusion

The young women in this study were not taking for granted that their life trajectories would follow an orderly pattern of education, jobs, marriage, children and domesticity. In this regard the routes they constructed for themselves tended to contrast significantly with the patterns they perceived their mothers to have followed. This shift in the form their narratives took is due largely to their perception of having more choices and opportunities available – a condition which allows for them to construct their individualised biographies according to values, goals and convictions generated from within their own narratives. One of the dominant values that informed the process of incorporating intimacy into their trajectories was autonomy. While intimate relationships were lent significance and, indeed constituted part of the future, the value of autonomy, also central to their narratives, provided a source of ambivalence as autonomy and intimacy were perceived as incompatible. The main obstacle to overcome within this problematic was the maintenance of a self outside of an involvement in a relationship.

These models of intimacy and negotiation strategies discussed by the young women are only constructions. It is difficult to know how these constructions will effect the ways in which these young women live out their future relationships. However, the values and ideals expressed here are made no less relevant by this. Although there has long been a line drawn between the private and the public sphere the location and nature of this boundary shifts and indeed the very division has been increasingly challenged (Morgan, 1996). The ideals and values which govern the subjective meaning of intimacy within what is seen as private life are inextricably linked to the public sphere[14]. Weeks (1995) makes the important argument that it is vital that problems generated in the realm of intimate life should reach the political agenda.

> 'Private life' has generated the social movements, around sex, gender, race, the quality of life, which have significantly changed the political agenda – and in so doing have shifted the boundaries between public and private.

[14] For example there has been an association between the family and moral order (Jagger and Wright, 1999:10). Controversy often surrounds the formation of family life and how people choose to live their intimate relations. These moral debates often centre on what the family *ought* to be in comparison to what *it is* (Silva and Smart, 1999).

> They have also, as we have seen, affected the ways in which we try to define our personhood, and our identities – identities which themselves dwell on the borderlines of the public and the private – and have thus begun to change the meaning of what it is to be an individual in society (Weeks, 1995 :136).

Expressions of the value of autonomy, respect, and freedom within the narratives created here constitute 'rights of everyday life' specifically a right to difference (Weeks, 1995:140-147). Within the context of an increasingly pluralistic culture the right to equality is being replaced by the right to difference – a right which can be interpreted as an endorsement of the right to make individual decisions and choices whereby a 'recognition of diversity and a respect for individual differences opens the way for new definitions of autonomy and authenticity' (Weeks, 1995:142). This is a right which is fundamentally about respecting different ways of being human and recognising the various ways that potentially exist for achieving self-defined ends. Giddens (1992:184-204) in a much more ambitious argument similarly links the private with the public domain when he argues that the transformation of intimacy and democratisation of the private realm has consequences for the wider social order.

> The advancement of self-autonomy in the context of pure relationships is rich with implications for democratic practice in the larger community...In positional bargaining which can be equated with a personal relationship in which intimacy is lacking – each side approaches negotiation by taking up an extreme stance...Global relations ordered in a more democratic manner would move towards principled negotiation. Here the interaction of the parties begins from an attempt to discover each other's underlying concerns and interests, identifying a range of possible solutions...(Giddens, 1992:195-196).

Within the context of theorising transforming patterns of intimate relations and changing family forms rights to difference are important because they allow for the development of an understanding of the ways family practices are being carried out which avoids interpreting change as the 'breakdown' of the family or as an indication of moral decline (Jagger and Wright, 1999:10; Silva and Smart, 1999). From the point of view of policy making, Silva and Smart (1999) argue that theorising fluidity and shifts in family configurations can inform ways for

institutional supports and policy frameworks to enhance autonomous choices in living arrangements[15]. Understanding changing family forms is also linked to understanding transformations to gendered identities because as Marshall (1994:132) points out transformations to family arrangements implicitly involve transformations to gendered identities and the gendered inequalities that the 'family, both as an institution and in practice, may sustain' (Jagger and Wright, 1999:5).

The pursuit of intimate relationships by the young women in this study, no longer bound by the same set of expectations faced by their mothers, was designed according to a set of patterns which exhibited characteristics of both old traditions or forms of intimacy and newer rules which seek to reinvent ways of being in a relationship. The old social forms, lived by their mothers, are destabilising but a desire for intimacy remains. This means that young women are left to navigate a series of contradictions but they are doing so within a set of conditions that allows for different routes to be constructed. The tensions they experienced in navigating the contradictions produced a set of strategies, the most common one being a perceived need to develop ways of negotiating equality and reciprocity within the relationship. Unlike their mothers who were perceived to have settled for less than then should have, these young women asserted the right of opting out if their conditions were not met. In effect, they constructed the pure relationship – one in which intimacy is based on equality; commitment lasts 'until further notice'; and being in relationship is ultimately not taken for granted but an active choice.

The implications of the autonomous self and its connection to a right to make one's own choices is furthered examined in the next chapter in relation to politics. Dimensions of difference will continue to be explored where the notion that identities can be constituted within uniform categories is examined in relation to the project of feminism. Generational difference, as illustrated in this chapter means that young women have different options. The implications of age as a

15 For a discussion of how postmodernism has affected the sociological project of theorising the family see Cheal (1991).

source of difference between women will be explored and it will be suggested a politics of identification must be embedded in the practices of everyday life whereby it is possible to find localised resistant identities at work. Like the construction of the intimate self, this is a self that is based upon a right to self determination. The link between this right to choice and individualism is discussed as a hybrid of Giddens' emancipatory politics and life politics - hybrid that can be thought of as constituting a postfeminist politics.

Chapter Seven: Emergent Feminist Identity(ies): The Micropolitics of Postfeminism

Certainly the propensity for young women to espouse opinions compatible with a feminist viewpoint yet at the same time lack any identification with feminism is not new. The inter-generational currency that feminism has come to lack has been a recurring problem which continues to bring to bear questions regarding the relative success or failure of second wave feminism[1]. A recent manifestation of such an evaluation of the significance of second wave feminism for young women surrounded the release of Germaine Greer's book, *The Whole Woman*. Reviews of the book and articles about Greer in the popular press at the time of the release of the book contained questions such as, 'She's Back. But does she still matter?', and, 'Is she relevant to young women?'. In one specific instance these kinds of questions were embedded in the structure of a page layout in a national newspaper which contained an advert for a talk by Greer promising, in relation to her book, a discussion of the future of feminism. Set provocatively alongside this advert was another one for Natasha Walter's book entitled *The New Feminism*[2] described as 'feminism for a new generation'. The underlying message here is not only that generational differences exist with regards to feminism but that those differences are often in opposition to each other.

In seeking to analyse how young women are engaging with the possibilities they confront in fashioning an identity in late modern society it has been obvious that an important aspect of this analysis is the influence of second wave feminism. This influence is complex and is at least dual in its significance. The first aspect of feminism which is relevant to consider in relation to the lives of young women involves the role feminism has played in bringing about changes to the social order

---

1 The term 'second wave' refers to the resurgence of feminism as a social, cultural and political movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The term is intended to include a wide variety of strands of feminism. Humm (1992:11) designates the beginning of second wave feminism as 1949 although this era is not historically discrete from previous feminist movements.

2 The newspaper in question is the Saturday March 6 (1999) edition of the Guardian. See the *Review* section, page 9.

in turn resulting in young women having more choices available to them than generations of women previous. The second mode of influence is the extent to which feminism as a discourse has entered the mainstream becoming what Erica Jong has said in relation to young women, '...is the whole climate of their lives, the air they breathe. It hardly even needs a name anymore' (Griffiths, 1999:8). Feminism is available for use as a potential resource in navigating the very choices it has helped to create but as made evident by the debates around Greer's current relevance the nature of the relationship between feminism, young women and life choices demands further consideration.

Difference, Fragmented Feminisms and the 'Postfeminist Self'

The aim of this chapter is to arrive at an understanding of the identities young women in this study were producing and the implications of the autonomous self for the current state of feminism. This will require the following: firstly, an examination of the problem of difference specifically in relation to age as an undertheorised source of fragmentation within feminism; secondly, to frame this problem in the context of debates surrounding the meaning of 'postfeminism'; thirdly, to assess the extent to which the self constructions of young women in the late 1990s can be deemed feminist or postfeminist; and finally, to relate these issues to the context of late modernity and the tension between emancipatory politics and life politics.

In relation to age based differences amongst women, it is becoming apparent that age is an increasingly significant source of difference. Sylvia Walby in *Gender Transformations* examines the high degree of success young women in the 1990s have enjoyed in both education and employment. She identifies age as a major differentiator of women's employment patterns with younger women having gained access to education and employment with considerably more success than older women (1997:55). Walby argues that it is age which most clearly shows the increasing polarisation in the experiences of women with this difference most starkly evident in relation to educational and occupational patterns. The implication

is that there is an immense differentiation between the lives of younger women and older women as the result of transforming social conditions (1997: 59).

In Britain, young women are now outperforming young men at primary school, secondary school, and into higher education as well. They are getting better results in both GCSEs and A-levels and they are making great gains in entry to traditionally male-dominated fields[3] (Roberts, 1995:47). As recently as ten years ago it was young men who held the advantage in educational attainment but now young women are more likely than men to participate in further education (Walby, 1997:44). It is interesting to note that in this study the areas of choice that young women identified as being most central to their lives in chapter three tended to be these areas where large gains have been won by and for women. Education and career options were very important to the young women interviewed whether they were aiming for university degrees to be followed by professional careers or were seeking to enter the workforce as soon as possible via training schemes or apprenticeship programs[4]. In view of these kinds of shifts in gender relations and social structures age will continue to provide a source of difference between women and the implications of these conflicts will continue to provide sources of fragmentation for feminism.

One of the central topics addressed throughout this study has been how these young women defined and engaged with the choices they had available to them as part of their reflexive 'project of the self.' For young women in contemporary society processes of individualisation and detraditionalisation mean that not only are a wide range of options available to them in terms of their self-definition, but that an active negotiation of positions which are potentially intersecting and contradictory is necessary. How is the navigation of choices available to young women related to generational difference and the debates about the currency of feminism in the late 1990s? In the biographies produced by young women is it

---

3 Despite their significant entry into these non-traditional areas, women are still underrepresented in certain subjects such as sciences (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:22).

4 Transformations in social conditions and the impact these have had on young people are discussed in appendix two.

possible to claim evidence of the viability of feminism for this generation? In the analysis of the research data generational difference appeared to be of consequence, for example, very few references were made to feminism at all. A consideration of this absence requires an inquiry into the meaning and significance of 'post feminism'.

The consequences of generational difference for a unified feminist movement are often framed within the context of an antagonistic relationship between younger and older women in which references are made to 'bad daughters', and 'lifestyle' feminists versus 'victim' feminism. Generally 'postfeminism' is approached with guarded scepticism by 2nd wavers while a younger generation of women display resistance to adopting an identification with a form of feminism they feel has no relevance to their daily lives. This friction is largely a variation of an issue that feminism has had to confront before, that is, the problem of difference.

Age as a Source of Difference

The recognition of exclusionary tendencies and the presumption to speak for all women within feminism marked a significant turning point in the development of feminism both as a body of theory and a political movement (hooks,1981; Riley, 1988; Spelman, 1990). By challenging the unity of the category 'woman' the biases inherent in early second wave feminism were exposed thus forcing a critical reappraisal of assumptions underlying feminism as a form of identity politics. Judith Butler has effectively framed the problem of difference for feminism as one of (mis)representation. The goal of feminism has been to represent the interests of women and in so doing has laid claim to the existence of a female subject who can be represented but pitfalls are inherent in such a strategy:

> The domains of political and linguistic 'representation' set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledge as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended (1990:1-2).

Feminism claims to represent a subject that it constructs itself with the paradoxical consequence that feminist goals risk failure by refusing to take into account the constitutive powers of its own representational claims (Butler, 1990:4). In short, the subject of feminism is produced by a discourse that claims to represent it and this representation is possible only at the expense of the exclusion of other identities. Ultimately, the fragmentation within feminism and the opposition to feminism by women who feminism claims to represent is indicative of the limits of identity politics. In response to those who would suggest expanding the scope of feminism to make it more inclusive Butler argues, 'what sense does it make to extend representation to subjects who are constructed through the exclusion of those who fail to conform to unspoken normative requirements of the subject?' (1990: 5-6).

The problem of making feminism more inclusive has been one that feminism has taken very seriously and continues to struggle with. Increasingly the literature makes reference to 'feminisms' because it is now recognised the extent to which the category 'woman' is characterised by difference rather than equality in terms of 'race', class, sexuality, nationality and religion to name but a few of the intersecting discourses that constitute women's simultaneous positionings. While difference has become acknowledged as one of the most serious challenges facing an increasingly fragmented feminism the issue of generational or age-based difference remains undertheorised[5]. Indeed a consideration of the voices and concerns of young women has been virtually absent from academic debates. This absence was addressed in a recent issue of the journal *Signs* devoted to the topic of 'Feminisms and Youth Cultures'. The motivation for the issue was,

> ...to interrogate how the lived experiences and cultural products of youth articulate, reflect, and transform feminisms, as well as how feminisms and associated analyses have themselves transformed those same lived experiences and cultural products. That is...how can an analysis of youth cultures innovate and renovate interdisciplinary feminist studies?' (Bhavani, Kent and Widdance Twine, 1998:575).

---

5 In relation to Butler's arguments McRobbie adds the question of how can feminism, within the contemporary context hope to reproduce itself among a generation of young

Again we return to the question of what can we learn about the relationship between young women and feminism?

Is Postfeminism Anti-feminism?

Inter-generational disagreement about what constitutes a feminist issue or a feminist identity has been a central feature of debates in which the meaning and significance of 'postfeminism' is assessed. From one position postfeminism is constructed as a thinly veiled form of anti-feminism. Writers such as Susan Faludi or Marilyn French implicate the work of Naomi Wolf and Katie Roiphe, for example, in a backlash against feminism. While this younger generation of writers attempt to deliver new perspectives on some of the old problems confronted by feminism their theories are often seen not only as flawed versions of 'real' feminism but as contributing to a hostile climate for feminism full stop.

Postfeminism is often construed as anti-feminist on the basis that it is seen to create the false impression that equality has been achieved, encouraging young women to pursue their individual freedoms at the expense of a collective female identity. Problems that young women encounter in achieving their goals are constructed as individual problems and not political ones. Writers such as Wolf are criticised for placing responsibility for resistance in the hands of individual women in what amounts to a liberal individualist politics (Whelehan, 1995:220). Furthermore, it is argued that postfeminism promotes an image of feminism as being responsible for the unhappiness women experience as a result of trying to have it all rather than as a movement that provides solutions to the problems women face. Faludi argues that regrettably, in a postfeminist climate, feminism as an oppositional discourse has lost its currency because it is seen as 'so seventies' – postfeminism from this perspective, therefore, means not only that women have arrived at equal justice and have moved beyond it, but also that they simply are beyond even pretending to care. This indifference, she argues, may deal one of the most devastating blows to women's rights yet (1991:95).

---

women. See McRobbie (1994:69).

While an older generation of feminists express disappointment about the ways in which a younger generation of 'new' feminists like Wolf or Walters engage in feminist issues this younger generation argues that the terms and conditions of 'old' feminism are no longer pertinent and carry harmfully proscriptive overtones. It is useful to return to Butler's (1990:5-6) argument about the futility of extending representation to subjects who are constructed through the exclusion of those who fail to conform to unspoken normative requirements of the subject because this point about difference and the normative nature of discourse can be extended to the issue of non-identification with feminism on the part of young women. For example, Naomi Wolf recounts her experience of exclusion:

> My friends and I are all self-defined feminists. But we know that if we were to stand up and honestly describe our lives to a room full of other feminist 'insiders' – an act that should illuminate the route to female liberation – we could count on having transgressed at least one dearly held tenet on someone's list of feminism's 'do's' and 'don'ts' (1993:68).

Moving Through the Impasse

The entrenchment of these two positions seemingly results in a stalemate. However, there is a body of literature that now attempts to move beyond the negative evaluation of postfeminism to framing the concept in more productive terms. Brooks (1997) argues that postfeminism is not anti-feminism but an *expression of a stage* in the constant evolutionary movement of feminism. As a conceptual frame of reference it encompasses the intersection of feminism with a number of other anti-foundationalist movements including postmodernism, poststructuralism, and post-colonialism. As such it is the expression of a critical interrogation of the foundations of feminism the goal of which is to address the conceptual shift that has occurred within feminism from debates around equality to a focus on debates around difference and how feminism might come to terms with difference.

The prefix 'post' is used here not as a signifier of a complete break in

previous social relations or as the overcoming of oppressive relations but rather as implying a *process of ongoing transformation.* This represents not a depoliticisation of feminism but a political shift in feminism's conceptual and theoretical framework. Postfeminism signals a critical engagement with patriarchy because it does not assume that patriarchal discourses and frames of reference have been displaced. It also signals a critical engagement with feminist frameworks, challenging hegemonic assumptions of earlier feminist epistemologies.

The focus of the following analysis will be based on the assertion that politicised identities were being created by the young women in this study. These identities will be examined in relation to both versions of postfeminism. On the one side, postfeminism as anti-feminism frames young women as depoliticised actors espousing liberal individualist politics in the pursuit of individual goals. Such a position relies on a politics based on a feminist identity which young women are seen to lack. On the other side of the debate, postfeminism will be interpreted as constituting a reflexive engagement with the limitations of hegemonic forms of feminism in order to understand how feminism is shifting and evolving. This commitment reflects the position expressed in the *Signs* special issue on female youth cultures, namely, the question of how the study of young women might renovate feminist studies? How might we interpret young women's construction of self as a form of political agency? How might we understand their engagements with choices and the creation of their own identities as expressing a politicised agency within conditions of postmodernity? These questions are tied to the point McRobbie (1994:73) makes when she argues that,

> ...politics occurs in the act of breaking away from the claim to be represented. New, emergent or otherwise excluded identifies emerge from this discourse of rejection and repudiation. 'This is not us', they are saying. And in saying so there is also a question of who indeed 'they' are.

In the interviews the young women discussed their perceptions of gender inequality and factors they felt limited the choices and opportunities young women have available. The suggestion that their opportunities and choices might be

limited by external factors was met with a very strong expression of individualism which reflects what Weeks (1995) identifies as a right to difference[6]. The principle of upholding individual rights and responsibilities was used to critique the suggestion that they might not be allowed to make choices in their lives. This was expressed in terms like, 'Don't let anyone tell you what to do', or, 'You just have to do want you want'. It is interesting, however, that this focus on individualism took on a pronounced resonance when tied to the issue of gender inequality. Despite critiques that impute to postfeminism the tendency to contribute towards young women's mistaken belief that equality has been achieved many of the young women interviewed in this study maintained that gender inequality was still an prominent issue in women's lives and when asked about the limitations that are placed on their own lives, the most frequent answer related to men and women having different opportunities available to them.

Gender relations were generally constructed by these young women as a set of relations in which men have traditionally possessed more power than women but with a recognition that this arrangement had transformed significantly and would continue to do so through a gradual, evolutionary progression. Thus traditional power arrangements were seen to be destabilising but not to the point where inequality was no longer an issue as evidenced in chapter six in the context of intimate relationships. The main areas identified as resistant to equality and in need of further transformation were sex stereotyping in careers, unequal pay, access to opportunities for advancement in the workplace and sport, sex stereotyping in domestic roles, and the double standard of sexual practices. To account for why equality had not yet been achieved many of the young woman drew on the notion that traditional views about women's appropriate roles intermingled with more progressive views. These traditional views were identified as one of the causes of continued resistance to women's equality. 'Men' were not necessarily perceived as a universal category with regards to their beliefs towards women and indeed the kinds of attitudes that continued to promote inequality were often attributed to older

6 Weeks refers to this right as the expression of an endorsement of the right to make individual decision and choices within the larger context of respecting individual

men. The following comments locate an older generation of men as the primary source of discriminatory attitudes.

> Lauren: I think that boys my age are more used to equality because for women there are a lot more choices out there for women as you come through school – you know what you want to do kind of thing. I think they have grown up with it a lot more than the older generation has because the older generation was when women were very limited. So the ones in my generation have grown up with it and they are used to it. *(Lauren, 19 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

> Prea: The guy I am seeing now, he sees me as an equal you know in the sense that anything I want to do he won't say, 'That's a man's thing to do' like when I said what job I want to do [police officer] he didn't say that's a man's job but my uncle did. *(Prea, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

While the perception of a generational difference in male attitudes was a dimension evident in accounting for remaining resistance to women's equality there was also an equally strong assertion that men, both young and old, were generally threatened by women gaining equality because it constituted a threat to male power and privilege.

> Lynn: I think that with some of the guys I know they actually get intimidated that a woman can get a lot higher than them now. They feel a bit overwhelmed because most of their parents are the typical ones where like the wife stayed at home with kids and the man worked. *(Lynn, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Kitty: I think with the older men it scares them, makes them feel less powerful because they've always had the power haven't they? They've always been in charge and women are taking control more now and I think that scares them. Some guys my age respect it more. They think, 'Good for you' but other ones just try to keep you down. *(Kitty, 18 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

> Mel: I think equality has quite shocked them especially with the Spice Girls and things, the dominance of women and things. I think the men like it up to a point, you know, they've got more assertive women and things but there's a slight worry because you see quite a few stories in the news where they are saying that businesses are now picking women for jobs because they are more intelligent and I think men are a bit frightened by that as well as quite happy.

---

differences (1995:142).

(Mel, 16 years old completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).

Mel's comments capture one of the central themes relating to the assessment of the current state of gender relations: that conditions for women have changed dramatically; that young women now enjoy a wide range of choices about how to live their lives; and that they have the right to self determination but coexisting with these conditions are those which counter women's equality thereby making resistance an issue of ongoing relevance. Posing answers to this dilemma, however, revealed a tendency on the part of these young women to attribute responsibility for a solution to individual women rather than identify with a collective political movement as the following quotations illustrate.

> Shelley: Do you think men and women are equal in our society?
> Lianne: No. I think women are getting more respect in what they're doing now and people are realising that we're not just there for cooking and cleaning. We can do just as good as men can do and better but no, I don't think we are.
> Shelley: How do you think that those existing inequalities can change?
> Lianne: Just women taking charge, not listening to, 'No you can't do that'. You've got to go for it and not listen and if more women started to not listen and just do what they want to do instead of being put down all the time then it'll change. *(Lianne, 16 year old, Careers Advice Centre).*

> Shelley: How do you think existing inequality can be overcome?
> Sasha: I think it is very hard to change something that has happened over generations but I think women have to stand up a bit more for themselves in a way. I don't know how realistic that is or how many people would do it but they should stand up more for themselves and argue their case. They should just argue or discuss it. It they want it badly enough they should. *(Sasha, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

> Shelley: Why do you think men and women are still treated differently?
> AJ: Probably because women still let people treat them like that. If we stood up more because men just think they are in charge but you've got to stand up and say, 'No you're not! We've got just as much right!'. We've still got to get that confidence to stand up and say we're just as good. *(AJ, 20 years old, Youthworks Programme).*

What each of these excerpts expresses is a recognition on the part of the young women that inequality is still a barrier that women face but when they speak

of 'women' in these accounts they are referring to *individual* women taking responsibility for what they want as individuals. They do not recognise or identify *themselves as the subject 'woman'* of feminist discourse nor is the *abstract 'woman'* they speak of clearly the subject of feminist discourse either[7]. Rather the majority of girls interviewed invoked the right of each individual to do what they want translating into the promotion of individualised solutions. The value of individual rights was clearly apparent in their discussion of role models and ideal female qualities.

> Lynn: The only person I've ever looked up to - I know this sounds stupid - is Sharon Stone or Madonna because they always do whatever they want and go against society and everything and I'd like to be able to do that. *(Lynn, 18 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Raj: My Grandma always encouraged me. If there was something I wanted to do she always said that if you want to do it, just do it for your own sake. *(Raja, 20 years old, completing a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, Pearson College).*

> Shelley: What do you think is the definition of the ideal woman?
> Alice: Someone that is strong and confident, successful, knows what they want and won't let anyone stand in their way. Professional as well but also be able to have fun and do what they want. *(Alice, 17 years old, completing lower sixth form at Greenwood School).*

To arrive at an understanding of how these comments can be situated or evaluated within the project of feminism it is useful to examine the feminist discourses that young women have available to them. It is these discourses that provide interpretative frameworks for young women. Skeggs (1997:144) points out that 'fragmentation, dispersal and the marketability and notoriety of certain aspects of feminism means that many women only have limited and partial knowledge about feminism'. She identifies one accessible brand of feminism that is available to young women as 'popular feminism'. This is a form of feminism that in the 1980s became separated from professional and academic feminism, its main feature being that it could be marketed. The term 'postfeminist' is often conflated with this

---

[7] This same tendency is discussed by Bev Skeggs in study of young working class women (1997).

form of popular feminism.

> ...it is the ability to pull out the individualist aspects - such as sexual power, autonomy, respect, self-esteem - of feminism and make them marketable which has helped to generate . . . contradictory effects. These aspects give feminism a popular front which provides selective appeal and reaches across class and 'race' divides by speaking to the desire to be autonomous, powerful, confident, glamorous, and so on. But while it does this it detaches feminism from the social and the systematic. It reduces feminism to the solitary individual and linkages across difference and distinction and any sense of collective responsibility are made invisible (Skeggs, 1997:144).

This appropriation of feminist ideals and the subsequent grafting onto consumable products is an often identified characteristic of the 'postfeminist climate' (Budgeon and Currie, 1995; Greer, 1999)[8]. The marketability of feminist discourse in this popularised form is what renders it so accessible and, therefore, readily available to young women within the context of their everyday lives. Its influence was apparent throughout the course of these interviews especially when the young women engaged with the notion of rights at the individual level. These discussions revealed a fundamental commitment to the ideals of justice and fairness values intrinsic to modernity. Indeed the idea of being treated unequally or unfairly produced a strong response in the young women. While it would be accurate to characterise their responses as expressions of this brand of highly individualistic 'popular feminism' to do so uncritically would risk failure of asking important questions such as can any value be retrieved from its appeal? What does this postfeminist 'popular feminism' provide?

The answer to this question involves a closer examination of the link between individualism and 'popular' feminism. While individualism privileges the worth of the individual at the expense of the collectivity it can also be a source of agency at the micro-level of everyday practices. The young women interviewed had no sense of a collective political tradition but they exercised a politicised agency at the micro-level of everyday social relations and this is what I propose be the focus of

---

8 Germaine Greer (1999) writes about how 'girlpower' is constructed and marketed in young women's' magazines.

retrieval. If we examine this level of micro politics and the ways in which young women negotiate conflicts we find a mixture of individualism wedded to feminist ideals. The following interviewee is quoted at length to examine how one young women uses both discourses to actively challenge the barriers she faces in day to day life.

> Shelley: Are men and women equal in our society?
> Morgan: At the moment it's like up in the air isn't? It's like women shouldn't be mechanics and men shouldn't be secretaries and you think, 'Why?'. So I think it's up in the air because you still get that. Like I wanted to be a mechanic and like, 'A girl mechanic?' you know. What's wrong with that? Here at careers if you say you want to do a man's job they look at you as if you're stupid.
> Shelley: So it's attitudes then?
> Morgan: Yeah and just because it's a mucky job it don't mean we can't do it and they say, 'Well what about your fingernails? What about your lovely skin?', and you're like, 'I don't care. I want to do it', but you get loads of looks. We're the little women you know. We've got to have nice little jobs like beauticians and nursing. No way. If I want to do a man's job, I'll do a man's job.
> Shelley: How do you think that women becoming more equal has affected the men you know?
> Morgan: Women aren't just the little women who sit at home and cook their husband's tea. Women are not frightened to speak.
> Shelley: So how do you think that has affected the lives of men you know?
> Morgan: Oh my Granddad won't hear of it! He's like, 'Oh I don't agree with that!' and you're like, 'Why'?. 'Women shouldn't haven't a say'. Then you say, 'You sexist chauvinist pig. I want to kill you!'. Yeah it's little women isn't it? They shouldn't have a say. They should be cooped up at home with kids, looking after them, cooking, happy little wife, cleaning.
> Shelley: What about men that are your age then like with Girl Power?
> Morgan: They think it's stupid. When we say, 'Hey it's Girl Power now', and they say, 'What?'. They say boy power has been around longer than Girl Power has and you just say like, 'Get a life we're in the nineties now!'. Why shouldn't we have a say?
> Shelley: Do you think because you're female that has ever been used to stop you from doing something?
> Morgan: Even worse yeah because a lot, take for instance my mate, she went for a mechanics job, a trainee mechanic and he said quite bluntly you need to be a lad for this. It's a lad's job and she stood up and just walked out and said I'm not having it. She couldn't do anything about it but he said it's a lads job for a mechanic and I say that if I'd been there they'd have punished him, 'Do you know what Girl Power is?'. But there is a lot of things that do stop you like sexism. They might not say it's a woman's job or a man's job but you tell by how they're going around it. They won't say it because they know they'll get into trouble for it now. So they don't

> actually come out and say it.
> Shelley: Do you find you have to stand up for yourself quite a bit?
> Morgan: Yeah when you're out it's like someone says, 'You will have this drink', and you say, 'I might not want this drink'. Then he says, 'How dare you stand up for yourself'. It's just little things like that. 'You're a woman. Shut up. You'll do what I say', and you say, 'No I won't'. I won't take it off of them because I don't think it's right. You'll go to the bar and they'll go, 'Right little lady. What do you want?', and you'll say, 'I don't want a drink off you. I want to buy my own'. 'But why? We're the men', and you just say ' Shut up'.
> Shelley: Do they seem to be surprised when you stand up for yourself?
> Morgan: Yeah. I don't think a lot of women that they know do stand up. But we do. Girl Power! The Spice Girls brought that out. Stand up for yourself! *(Morgan, 18 years old, Careers Guidance Centre).*

In this exchange Morgan is speaking from a position in which she is able to challenge the barriers that she encounters as a young woman situated within unequal gender relations. She draws on a feminist discourse which she deploys at the micro level of everyday life. Many of the choices that young women negotiate in daily life involve a struggle to assert a self–definition that runs counter to the ways in which they are positioned by competing discourses. In Morgan's case one of the struggles involves the right to make choices for herself such as pursuing a career regardless of her gender while another is refusing a drink from a man in a social setting. In each instance that she recounts in her narrative she finds herself positioned in conflict with guidance counsellors, her grandfather, boys her own age, and potential employers. This conflict results from her taking up a resistant position that is individualised but also about structured relations of gendered inequality.

Postfeminism is often critiqued for being apolitical and attractive to young women because it contributes to a belief that gender equality has been won thereby engendering complacency. I would suggest, however, that the kinds of feminist discourse available to young women in a postfeminist climate allow them to understand their location within social relations and the resistance they encounter as being due in some part to a gendered struggle over power. In her narrative Morgan constructs a series of scenarios in which she actively positions herself in a conflictual relation to others who seek to define her on the basis of her gender. In

telling this story she reveals how she practices a resistant identity. There are many accounts of such resistance in this research data and it is this which makes me reluctant to foreclose on the possibility that social change is happening at this micro level of daily interactions.

While young women in this study were not involved in activities that feminism would typically constitute as activism, that is, engagement in collective political action, it would be inaccurate to say that they are apolitical or guided entirely by a liberal individualist ethic in the pursuit of individual goals. These young women use a interpretative framework that owes much of its potency to feminism. The result of employing such a framework is the reproduction of a subject position constituted in large part by feminist ideals. It is a position from which young women come to understand how inequality operates in their lives and in turn use this understanding to assert their rights at the micro level. The transformative power of feminist discourse remains even when the interpretative framework in question may well be derived from a brand of postfeminism.

Postfeminism and Life Politics

The coexistence of 'old' feminism and 'new' feminism can thought of as being characteristic of politics in postmodernity. These two forms approximate what Giddens has designated 'emancipatory' and 'life' politics each associated with a specific set of historical social conditions. Modernity, driven by the imperative of freeing human social life from pre-existing constraints, translates into a political outlook concerned with liberating individuals and groups from conditions that limit their life chances. It is explicitly organised by principles of justice, equality and participation. Life politics, in contrast, is a politics of lifestyle options, where the goal of self-actualisation and rights of individualised choice assume that some level of emancipation from traditions and conditions of domination has been achieved. One of the central issues for life politics is access to the means to self-actualisation (Giddens, 1991:228). Political issues emerge from processes of self-actualisation and the decisions that one must confront in reflexively producing a narrative of self-

identity. The two forms of politics are not mutually exclusive and as the example of gender inequality demonstrates questions arising within one type inevitably pertains to the other as well. The availability of opportunities and the option of 'adopting freely chosen lifestyles, a fundamental benefit generated by a post-traditional order, stands in tension...with barriers to emancipation' (Giddens, 1991:231).

Feminism is fundamentally an emancipatory discourse as it has its origins in modernity and a liberal humanist political philosophy which emphasises universal rights to equality but as a movement is made towards postmodernity increasing differentiation problematises the notion of universality resulting in fragmentation and the questioning of unity. There is still an emphasis on the right to self determination and the right to choose but it becomes increasingly difficult to prescribe in advance the answers to questions about how to live and how to navigate those choices.

Within the narratives of self identity constructed in this study the mingling of emancipatory feminism with a life politics style of feminism is apparent in the ways in which gender inequality is defined as a collective problem but with an individual solution. The attribution of the problem to a general set of conditions in which social relations are structured by gendered inequality is perceived as a problem which affects the life chances of individual women. These constraints, however, were experienced by the young woman as a politics of lifestyle where inequality meant that their individual choices and life decisions were affected. The recognition that these young women were negotiating their choices and constructing their own biographies within social conditions that had significantly been re-organised by the principles of second wave feminism was apparent in references made to equal opportunity legislation and women centred support networks. Louise, quoted below, attributed awareness of domestic violence to efforts made by the women's liberation movement to bring this form of abuse to public attention.

> Shelley: How do you think women are becoming more equal?
> Louise: Well, more wife beaters are getting locked up now.

> Shelley: Do you think that is the result of the women's movement?
> Louise: Well yeah because it used to be seen as normal, just give them a slap. It was part of being in a relationship. *(Louise, 21 years old, Youthworks programme).*

Yet these kinds of moments of awareness of gender inequality as a collective problem rooted in structural conditions had its strongest resonance in relation to issues surrounding self-actualisation. The main issue for these young women was the ways in which gender inequality as a particular social relation impeded their ability to choose to do what they wanted with their lives. In the following quote Kitty interprets the educational choices her friend has made as being determined by male attitudes.

> Kitty: I think it will take time for things to change. A lot of women don't have the confidence to go out and do what they want because of what men will say and once women get that confidence then things will change. I had a friend at school who wanted to be a builder and because of what people would say she did beauty instead. She always wanted to work outdoors but she's still doing beauty therapy training. You see her tottering around in a little white coat. *(Kitty, 18 years old, Careers Advice Centre).*

Because life politics is concerned with self actualisation it appears to be highly individualistic as does postfeminism but as Giddens argues self discovery is not a celebration of individualism, rather, it signals a major transition within late modernity as a whole (1991:207). Postfeminism, as a transitional moment is located in between two political frameworks incorporating both emancipatory themes and ones more explicitly concerned with individual choices thus two strands run through postfeminist politics. The first strand is defined by themes characteristic of a feminism with its roots in modernity and identification with the universal subject 'woman'. The second strand is about differences emerging within that category under postmodern conditions and the resulting shift of emphasis onto individual choices as universals dissolve. To think productively about the capacity for postfeminism to be conducive to social change is to think of it as a 'politics of becoming'[9] (Rutherford, 1990:14). Identification, if it is to be productive can never be with a static and unchanging object because it is an interchange between the self

9 Rutherford makes this point in relation to the transformation of Left politics and the

and structure but 'if the object remains static, ossified by tradition or isolated by a radically changing world, if its theoretical foundations cannot address change, then its culture and politics lose their ability to innovate' (ibid.).

Conclusion

In late modernity feminism, in all its various manifestations, encompasses a number of tensions and conflicts. This is apparent within its continued fragmentation and the escalation of difference between women. It is also made evident by the recognition that many feminist ideas have become part of the common sense of our culture yet those ideas are often expressed in a form we barely recognise as feminist (Whelehan, 1995:196). These two issues are interrelated because whether we recognise a particular stance as feminist or not depends upon our sense of identity within a particular faction thus raising the question of who is allowed to construct an authentic feminist position or claim a feminist identity? Identity is, after all, always plural and shifting. The contradictory and complex nature of identities makes a politics based upon the representation of a unified identity inherently flawed. Representation seeks to define and thereby fix in place a secure or uniform identity but one consequence has been the non-identification by young women as that subject suggesting that their difference evades this fixing in place[10].

The problem of difference within the category 'woman' has revealed that there are as many ways of becoming a feminist as there are of becoming a woman (Douglas, 1994). For feminism difference has meant trying harder to understand the multiple ways of being a woman and by implication the multiple ways of being a feminist. Fragmentation has provided many different ways for women to be

---

disadvantages of identity politics.

10 Difference here is about age but it is important to acknowledge that young women are also different in relation to each other according to 'race', ethnicity, class, disability and sexuality. One of the main areas of difference that emerged in this study was between young Asian women and the young White women. The Asian women commented specifically on the intersection of ethnicity and gender and the constraints placed upon their choices by both sets of relations particularly with regard to how both in combination

feminist although the positivity of diversity is rarely represented. Griffin (1989) has asked what does it mean when a woman says, 'I'm not a feminist but...' and suggests that it is a way of speaking feminism without making an identification with it. Non-identification may display a refusal to be fixed into place as a feminist, but may also be a sign of the inability to position oneself as feminist because of confusing and contradictory messages about what feminism really is (Skeggs, 1997:142). This is a point of major significance. What is feminism? When an answer to such a question is so difficult to produce is it surprising that young women don't identify themselves as feminist?

Difference is not just about 'race', class, or ethnicity but age as well. Within the transformations that feminism in Britain is currently undergoing it is important to recognise the different ways young women are being positioned and positioning themselves within social relations and conditions that have transformed significantly in the past 30 years. In a discussion of popular culture and Madonna as a postfeminist role model, Young argues, 'It is too easy to argue that divergence equals dilution, and anyway who claims the authority to say what is and what is not a feminist representation, or who is and who is not feminist?' (1989: 188). In effect, the opposition of the categories 'feminine' and 'feminism' may no longer capture the experience of young women (McRobbie, 1993:409). Indeed the gap increasingly seems to be between professional or academic feminism and more accessible types of popular feminism (Stuart, 1990:29).

Non-identification with feminism on the part of young women might signal a collapse of feminist politics but only if a certain notion of politics and social change is adhered to, namely a form of feminism which relies upon foundations. However, a rethinking of the relationship between feminism (as a practice and a discourse) and the subject as an active agent may reveal that identification does not depend on recognition. The young women in this study do not recognise themselves as the subject of feminism and so do not actively incorporate the category 'feminist' into their identities but a more subtle affinity is at play as they

---

created specific kinds of limitations.

practice identities informed by feminist ideals. Pursuing the goal of developing a more comprehensive or inclusive notion of the feminist subject that would appeal to young women is not necessary as this move would signify a return to a foundational form of feminism which inevitably relies upon exclusion of those who fall outside the normative constraints of those criteria which constitute inclusion. Within feminist politics it seems a miscalculated goal to seek to represent in advance all the interests at play when, for instance in this study feminism appears in the narrative as both a form of emancipatory politics (associated with modernity) and life politics (associated with late/post modernity). The pitting of 'old feminism' against 'new feminism' and the debates about which form of politics is a more accurate representation of young women doesn't seem particularly relevant to the ways in which they negotiate identities that are inherently contradictory. It is more likely that aspects of both are at play and as Anna reminds us in the following quote the contradictions of female identity can provide a source of pleasure.

> Anna: Sometimes I will just go all out you know. I'll do it just to take the piss and wear the long floating dress and even wear roses in my hair and just be the dead romantic and then I'll wear combat boots because I like the contrast...the idea on surface you can say, 'Look at me! I'm the girlie type' and then when people actually meet you and talk to you they realise that you're as far from that as you ever could be and I enjoy that. I think that is funny. I may be skinny and weedy and be wearing a floaty dress and roses in my hair but you know I've got a bite. *(Anna, 18 years old, completing lower sixth form, Ripley School).*

A more viable strategy is to relieve categories, in this case 'feminist' of foundational moorings and leave them as sites of permanent contest. Such a move leaves open possibilities and avoids potential future exclusions. It also allows one to reach a different understanding of political engagement and what counts as feminist activity.

> ...If feminism presupposes that 'women' designates an undesignatable field of differences, one that cannot be totalised or summarised by a descriptive identity category, then the very term becomes a site of permanent openness and resignifiability...To deconstruct the subject of feminism is not, then, to censure its usage, but, on the contrary, to release the term into a future of multiple significations...it may be that only through releasing the category

> of women from a fixed referent that something like 'agency' becomes possible (Butler, 1992:16).

This strategy provides an effective means of addressing the problem of difference and the difficulties inherent in identity politics. With regards to the young women interviewed in this research resistance to gender inequality was in operation without the assertion of a clearly recognisable feminist identity being asserted by individual subjects. Within a social context transformed by second wave feminism this signals the emergent of new 'feminist' identities marked by their own distinct concerns yet not without a certain affinity with those 'old' feminists identities. These emergent identities borrow what they need from existing discourses, including second wave feminism which does address some of their concerns, but does not always allow them to fully articulate their experience thus other resources are used in the production of new identities and reconfigurations which are not without contradictions. These contradictions and the lack of unity within the category 'women' though are not about incommensurability but relationships of complicated entanglement which are not only marked by disagreement but overlapping vocabularies, frameworks and assumptions (Felski, 1997). It is important to remember, therefore, that the continued goal for the project of feminism is to learn to practice conflict constructively (Hirsch and Keller, 1990).

At times the failure of a new generation of young to identify with feminism is seen as a failure on the part of feminism or in a more extreme argument is seen as the collapse of feminist goals. To think of the way in which second wave feminism has impacted on the lives of young women requires a more positive evaluation. Part of the legacy of second wave feminism is that young women today have available to them ideas not only about being able to make choices but that the very notion of choice is their fundamental right. That they don't acknowledge their debt to feminism is an indication of the extent to which feminism in late modernity is not a marginalised discourse but has become a basic part of the context in which young women are making sense of their lives. It is part of the interpretative framework employed in the ways they practice their own identities. To say that their identities may be 'postfeminist' is productive in so far as 'postfeminism' is understood as

being about a critical interrogation of the limits of second wave feminism and leaving open the goal of understanding the multiple ways of being a feminist. What can be retrieved from listening to young women is a greater understanding of how agency, informed by feminist ideals, operates as a form of decentralised resistance at the level of the everyday contributing to the continuing transformation of social relations as well as feminism itself.

Chapter Eight: Concluding Considerations or There's No End in Sight...

To arrive at a conclusion after the series of interrogations performed in this work seems somewhat dubious as it suggests linearity; progression towards a final goal; a definitive movement towards an endpoint. It is my dissonance towards these connotations that renders a conclusion a troublesome offering to deliver as this project has not been motivated by the desire to reach a specific destination or secure closure. However, drawing on the spirit expressed by Elspeth Probyn (1993:165) in her confession that, 'much as I hate writing conclusions, I do appreciate the conclusions of others', an attempt will be made in this final chapter to draw together some of the main considerations that this project raises.

The aim of reading identities emerges in this study as a complex task. It has been argued that a reading must first locate the subject within a specific set of socio-historical elements that constitute a condition of postmodernity. This a condition characterised by fluidity and heterogeneity where the myth of a unitary reality can no longer be accepted. It is a condition that makes grand narratives increasingly difficult to sustain or justify through an appeal to reason, progress, or historical necessity. It is a condition in which the belief in a rational and self-constituting subject – the universal subject of humanist discourse - has been undermined, and where assumptions underlying universality have been laid open to critique by a turn to questions about difference. Knowledge production shifts from a position of objectivity to one that is explicitly located in the local and everyday. It is a condition where theorising turns from a focus on things to a focus on words (Barrett, 1992:201). The constitutive role of language and the movement of meanings across a range of discursive formations becomes central to the analysis undertaken. Finally, it is a condition in which identity as the expression of an essential interiority is problematised through the location of the subject within a multiplicity of practices, knowledges, spaces, relations, programmes – all of which form specific technologies that work to produce the subject and enact a particular relation to the self.

Debates surround what constitutes a 'postmodern' condition and whether these conditions accurately represent contemporary society. These questions, however, are also about how we understand our relation to these conditions. Central to the project of sociology is the task of developing tools, strategies and methods for theorising a particular set of social conditions. This objective has been a motivating force behind this project. While asking what kind of identities are being formed by young women within a specific set of conditions the question was also posited of how to adequately theorise this relation. Therefore, thinking through the positioning of young women within this set of postmodern conditions required an engagement with the theoretical tools on hand. Social theory delivers the programme set out by theorists of reflexive modernisation – most notably Giddens and Beck and as this theoretical position takes as its point of departure the assumption of increased fluidity, fragmentation, and plurality within contemporary social conditions it seemed a sound place to commence an investigation. However, many of the ontological assumptions of reflexive modernisation prove inadequate for this project – that is a detailed reading of the ways young women's identities are constructed within conditions of postmodernity. In the analysis conducted in this study some of these assumptions were examined and broken apart using principles that implicitly constitute a poststructuralist approach. It is from this exercise that a number of important considerations emerge. Before discussing these more directly a review of the chapters will set the context for highlighting a set of issues central to theorising identities in postmodernity.

In chapter two the assumptions of reflexive modernisation were explored in order to begin to indicate where some of the problems with this approach could arise. This critique revealed an overemphasis on a conception of the subject as a rational, instrumental, and self constituting origin of meaning. An overprivileging of reflexivity can contribute to the dislocation of the subject from concrete social and historical contexts and result in the undertheorisation of relations organised through localised specificity, heterogeneity and difference. A poststructuralist decentring of the subject moves the emphasis away from self constitution towards

specific localities where the organisation of knowledges, practices, and relations create the conditions for the production of the subject. This idea was further explored in chapter three where narratives of the self produced by young women were read as being indicative of constituting a particular form of selfhood – the autonomous self characterised by a belief in authenticity, independence and an essential interiority. This is a self that expresses the principles of modernity: individual sovereignty and the belief in being able to submit contingency to human control. This modern form of selfhood, however, was problematised by locating it within a specific context of problematisations, authorities, technologies, strategies and teleologies revealing it as a relation to the self that arises out of the organisation of relations, practices and knowledges – all of which belong to a historical and local regime of subjectification.

The interrogations of these narratives about choice and life planning revealed that the individual is incited to reflect upon her own conduct in a certain manner and orient her conduct towards reproducing this relation to the self. It was apparent that the narratives functioned to maintain this construction of the self and through this specific construction the young women engaged with the choices they had available to them with regards to decisions about their lives. Not only were these narratives embedded within a particular context that made particular constructions possible but which also put limits on the kinds of stories that could be told and the kinds of self that could be created. Tensions are created by the discursive positioning of subjects within categories like gender, class, 'race', and ethnicity which operate to define statuses that are not chosen as much as ascribed. How the self is rendered thinkable is an effect of these positionings. The young women were aware of their choices being constructed in relation to these ascriptions which exist external to and prior to the individual that comes to be positioned within these categories. These ascribed statuses often conflicted with the kind of self the young women were constructing but they also reinforced certain perceptions these young women had of 'who they were meant to be'.

To arrive at an understanding of how the body was related to the identities of the young women interviewed it was argued again that the subject must be theorised as an embedded subject if the limits of a mind/body dualism are to be transcended. In this analysis it became apparent that the meaning of the self/body relation was more complex than many social constructionist accounts allow for. This discussion also problematised the idea that the body is an object that is reflexively appropriated into the project of the self. Meanings do not simply become inscribed on the body as though it were a blank surface. Rather meanings attach, enfold, split apart, detach and reattach in a constant process of becoming in which the body is not an object separate from the subject but an event constituted by the connections the body makes with other bodies, practices, knowledges, devices, techniques, and relations. A privileging of the mind (reflexivity) over the body restricts an understanding of how the self and body are implicated in a mutually constitutive but irreducible relation because to privilege the mind is to suggest that the mind assigns meaning to the body via the consumption of images and representations. This theoretical perspective reduces the potential for understanding agency in relation to bodily practices and the meanings of these practices in relation to the self. This is particularly problematic for feminism where women's relation to their bodies has been constructed as mediated by an economy of signification that relies upon the negation of the body, materiality, and female corporeality. It is productive, therefore, to locate the body as more than a semiotic problem and, rather, as a borderline concept - neither pure subject or pure object. These issues were addressed through an exploration of how young women critically engage with media constructions of ideal femininity and how they position themselves via their engagements in both resistant and disciplinary ways where the meaning of the self/body relation can convert, fluctuate, modify, but where any securing of meaning is made temporary by the movement of the embedded self in and out of the technologies which effect its becoming.

To examine how the relationship between the self and others is given meaning, the postmodern principle of difference was analysed in chapter five. The tendency in theories of reflexive modernisation to posit a universal subject that is

seemingly disembedded from social relations limits its usefulness in understanding how postmodernity is a condition in which the concept of difference must be taken into account. Although difference has been recognised as central to postmodernity to effectively use it as a theoretical tool it is useful to make a distinction between three dimensions contained within the concept: fragmentation; the relational production of meaning; and experiential diversity. These aspects of difference produce and organise conditions within which axes of identity articulate. The analysis of how the young women and practitioners implicitly use the notion of difference to construct 'choice' and limits to those choices revealed that difference is central to understanding the relationship between self and other where social relations like gender and class are hierarchically structured. Although these categories are somewhat stable the meanings of these relations shift and alter as was the case with gender. These shifts affect the identifications made. To understand how the self and the other are located within these relations it is useful to understand that identity operates within two realms: as a set of social categories where individuals are located on the basis of their 'sameness', and, as a sense of one's own uniqueness or difference from others. The construction of self identity involves an interplay between these two realms where social categories that describe a set of relations that exist over time and space are used as the basis for locating the self and others. Identification of the self within these relations is in part due to ways in which the subject is produced through experience and one's subjective engagement in practices, institutions, and discourses.

The implications of the pluralisation of axes of identity within postmodernity, as a dimension of difference, were evident within the specific areas where these young women had to make choices about how to live their lives. Transformations to the constraints of ascribed statuses, predominantly gender have produced a set of social conditions in which self-definition is increasingly important. Compared to previous generations of young women these young women had a greater diversity of routes available to them with regards to education, training options and careers paths. In chapter six the implications of increased choice were located within the context of intimacy where these young women were

able to exercise their aspiration for autonomy. The desire to enter into an intimate, committed relationship with a partner produced significant conflict for the kind of self under production – the autonomous self. The construction of an individualised biography, where access to choice is central, demands an active negotiation of the conflicts produced by attempts to reconcile autonomy and connection. In response to this tension the young women achieved a reconciliation by developing a set of strategies and models for living out intimate arrangements. These models reflect the incorporation of varying degrees of what Giddens argues are elements of a pure relationship with other elements that are more traditional thus suggesting that intimacy has not undergone a wholesale transformation but is about both continuity and change. A primary concern for these young women was the maintenance of their independence and their right to difference – that is the expression of the right to individual choice. Again, the importance of difference as an analytical tool becomes apparent because autonomy emerges as a way of being different or unique.

The implications of a right to difference also had repercussions for the ways in which the young women in this study positioned themselves in relation to collective identities. As a social movement arising in the 1960s, second wave feminism has fragmented and diversified through the impact of difference within the category 'woman'. One source of fracturing that must be acknowledged is age but it was found that this fracturing does not constitute a clear split from the tenets of second wave feminism in favour of a depoliticised, anti-feminist, highly individualised form of individual rights which is often called 'postfeminism'. The non-recognition of the self with the collective subject of feminism was apparent in these interviews, however, to understand both the expression of the right to individualism and the right to equality as a form of feminist politics it is necessary to reconceptualise what constitutes a politicised identity. An exploration of the micro level of everyday life revealed the engagement of young women in discursively constructed relations that sought to inscribe them in certain ways. Resistance, rooted in the autonomous self, however, must be reconceived in terms that avoid foundationalism because the limits of foundational discourses emerge from the exclusion of others that the establishment of such foundations rely upon.

The prefix 'post' can be attached to feminism to express the ongoing transformation of gender as a discourse, as a set of relations, and feminism as a practice and a point of identification. The challenges presented to feminism by a critique of its foundations are the challenges that postfeminism attempts to address.

In summary, there are a set of social conditions that constitute the historical moment within which these young women were interviewed about their lives: their goals, attitudes, beliefs and choices. Their narratives were produced within conditions that have transformed such that new possibilities for constructing a self have emerged – possibilities that undermine the marginalisation of young women derived from the combined effect of their positionings with relations organised around age and gender. The expressions of their experience of these conditions support the notion that postmodernity is characterised by a 'greater degree of fluidity about what femininity means and how exactly it is anchored in social reality' (McRobbie, 1994:157). These possibilities arise out of the transformations that have occurred within particular meanings attached to relations, most notably gender, which was characterised in the narratives produced here as both a constraining relation and one which was about increased freedom to define the self. Indeed gender practices and structures appear to be characterised by a degree of fluidity (ibid.). For these young women postmodernity means an increased range of choices about who they want to be and how they want to define themselves. This was also derived from the enactment of a particular relation to the self in negotiating those choices – an autonomous self with an authentic and essentialised interiority. This relation to the self has several ramifications. The first pertains to questions about agency.

> Agency is itself an effect, a distributed outcome of particular technologies of subjectification that invoke human being as subjects of a certain type for freedom and supply the norms and techniques by which that freedom is to be recognised, assembled, and played out in specific domains...agency is, no doubt, a 'force', but it is a force that arises not from any essential properties of 'the subject' but out of the ways in which humans have been-assembled-together (Rose, 1998:187-188).

The declaration of confidence, of belief in self efficacy and the assertion of a right to make choices made by these young women are expressions of agency made possible by the enactment of this particular regime of subjectification. When this self articulated with discursive positionings that sought to limit choice and freedom it allowed for a positioning of the self that is resistant to the definitions of others. This was apparent in the ways in which the right to make individual choices was invoked within the context of intimate relationships for example. Within a broader context this form of selfhood for these young women suggests a certain refusal to be located by others thus the disruptive moment contained within autonomy. So while there was a considerable degree of uniformity in the narratives produced, this uniformity was about difference – the right to be whoever one wants to be and the right to be able to make choices. This opens up spaces within which to constitute and live out emergent forms of femininity.

However, this regime of subjectification also produces regulatory effects. It produces a belief that one must become a particular type of subject that may be more difficult to create and sustain for some young woman compared to others. In this study it was much more difficult for the young women who were involved in youth outreach projects to enact self confidence than for the young women who were attending Greenwood School. In this respect this regime of subjectification is embedded in a set of hierarchical social relations and material conditions within which young women occupy diverse locations. The autonomous self is potentially problematic in so far as it operates to obscure this fact and works to individualise failure and construct inequality as a individual predicament.

An attempt has been made in the analysis undertaken here to understand the relation these young women had to the choices available to them: how they understood those choices; what they thought those choices meant; how they actively negotiated those choices and the implications of these processes. In short, the argument made throughout this project is that these questions require strategies for understanding how the conditions that constitute postmodernity effect the formation of young women's identity. It is the development of this argument that

contributes to the ongoing project of knowledge production within the context of what is known as the 'cultural turn' - the influence that poststructuralism has come to bear on the production of knowledges across a range of academic disciplines[1] - notably a turn from materiality to discourse, challenges to assumptions about causality and searches for origins, and the centrality of language in the construction rather than conveyance of meaning (Barrett, 1992:202-203).

The Cultural Turn

The suggestion in the title of this chapter that 'there is no end in sight' is a reference to the refusal to envision the goal of knowledge production as seeking some form of 'truth' or finality. Rather, this project has used empirical data as a lens through which to read and interrogate assumptions of existing approaches to identity. The main points that have emerged are: a challenge against the self-constituting self; the centrality of difference; the importance of relational aspects of identity[2]; a need to acknowledge the micro-level of everyday events and experiences; and the breaking apart of unified categories and binaries. The goal in performing these interrogations has been not to build theory so much as break it apart, see how it works and engage in a reassembly of bits and pieces to see what effect might be produced on ways of understanding. This exercise has been conducted within a context where the proposition of the advent of postmodernity produces a certain level of anxiety for intellectuals and has 'far-reaching consequences for the strategy of intellectual work in general and the traditional business of conducting sociology' (Bauman, 1992:103).

> The form acquired by sociology and social philosophy in the course of what is now, retrospectively, described as 'modernity' is indeed experiencing at the moment an unprecedented challenge. While in no way doomed, it must adjust itself to new conditions in order to self-reproduce. (Bauman: 1992:105).

---

1 Barrett(1992) effectively explains this turn in relation to the ongoing development of feminist theory.

At times sociology has been hesitant to embrace the 'cultural turn' because in many respects to do so would undermine many of the premises upon which sociology has relied in order to theorise its central concerns - the social i.e. systems of social relations and structures; the self i.e. agency; and social knowledge i.e. general approaches to knowledge and conceptions of the role of the academic intellectual[3]. Barrett (1992:205) in relation to the influence of the cultural turn in knowledge production asks 'whether any given problem can be rethought within the terms of reference of one's existing theory, or whether - in order to proceed - one has to develop a new framework altogether'? In response I would advocate the position taken by Seidman (1997:37) who argues new disciplinary possibilities for social knowledge can emerge from a sociology that engages with alternative social knowledges such as cultural studies. It is only through this exercise that the discipline can enact a critical self examination and reformation. This argument is particularly salient with regards to the decentring of the self enacted throughout the interrogations performed in this study because sociology often

> assumes the individual as the foundation of social life and figures the self as an internally coherent, rationally calculating agent. Cultural studies departs from these assumptions by imagining the individual as socially produced; as occupying multiple, contradictory psychic and social positions or identities and by figuring the self as influenced by unconscious processes (Seidman, 1997:46).

An appropriation of concepts from cultural theory and poststructuralism can contribute to the production of knowledge by inducing a 'critical reflexivity in a discipline which sometimes fantastically imagines its conventions and languages of the social as providing a privileged access to the social universe' where the goal is not to produce the means of arriving closer to a destination called 'truth' but to open up productive avenues to asking new questions about the social and the self thereby creating possibilities for different political interventions (Seidman,

---

2 This is Seigel's term (1999:285). It refers to aspects of identity where meanings of subjectivity are organised discursively through operations of language.

3 See Seidman (1997) for a discussion of these three areas of concern and how sociology might develop strategies for rethinking assumptions through an engagement with cultural

1997:54). Yet, as illustrated in this research, it is essential to continue to listen to 'spoken voices' and to engage with lived experiences – something that is often absent from cultural studies (McRobbie, 1994:178). This project contributes to such an aim - a postmodern reorientation to sociology where a self-consciously and self-critical approach to theorising undertakes to localise and destabilise theory with a view to constantly recast foundations in order that more flexible responses to sociological questions can be enacted (Cheal, 1991:156-58).

---

studies. Although Seidman is making his argument specifically in relation to American sociology his critique also has implications for sociology outside of the American context.

Appendix One: Research Design

This project arose from an interest in theorising the relationship between the lived experiences of young women and cultural representations of femininity. Upon consideration it became apparent that this question was part of a larger one about young women and self identity – about how young women actively negotiate possible ways of being in order to construct a self. The initial aim of the project was to engage in an exploration of themes surrounding the content of the identities under construction. However, the aim was also to focus upon the means available for theorising the content of the identities and also to attempt to develop an explanation for the ways in which the young women interviewed constructed their identity.

Pilot Study

In March of 1997 two focus groups were held – one with seven young women at Pearson College and one with six young women at Ripley School (described below). The purpose of these discussion groups was to begin to formulate an understanding of the issues surrounding questions of identity that had most resonance with young women. To facilitate the discussion fashion magazines were used as an object of discussion. The rationale behind this strategy was that questions surrounding identity or who one wants to be appeared frequently within popular discourses and the advertising and articles in these magazines reflected this concern. Constructions of the textual 'ideal self' in fashion magazines – the product of a range of topic areas including body image, confidence, pressure to change oneself, gender roles, career planning, and advice about relationships were used to generate discussion with these young women about their own self identity. These discussion lasted about ninety minutes. They were recorded, transcribed, and analysed. Emergent themes that related most directly to key aspects of theories of reflexive modernisation became the basis for the construction of a structured interview schedule. The structured interview schedule was standardised across all five sites. The main topic areas included: choices and constraints; life planning; desire to change aspects of one's life'; external pressures; body awareness; ideals

and influences; gender and equality; relationships; and negotiating conflicts.

The Study

Interviews were constructed with a total of thirty three young women and six practitioners across a total of five different sites from April 1997 to October 1998. Access to each site had to be negotiated with a gatekeeper, often a head teacher or manager of the organisation. Within each site the project was broadly described to potential participants and young women were invited to participate[1]. The interviews which on average lasted 90 minutes were conducted on site during times that the young women had free.

Interview Sites

Purposive sampling was used to select the interview sites. These particular sites were specifically chosen to reflect the range of institutions in which young women are located as they navigate divergent routes through adolescence into adulthood. At sixteen years of age, with the end of compulsory education, young women must begin to confront decisions regarding future careers and what type of education and training they wish to pursue. These interview sites indicate to some extent the degree to which the choices available to young women vary[2]. The aim of this research was not to compare individuals in terms of variables like class, however, the interview sites can be conceptualised as representing the diversity of young women's experiences. The sites can, for instance, be thought of constituting different class contexts although this is not to say that individuals within sites are being assigned a class designation. Also the identities that were being produced within these sites are very much site specific. These sites represent a socio-historical context and it is important to recognise that they are only one of the many sites within which young women engage in formulating their identities. If an ethnography had been the method used in this project, a multiplicity of contexts

[1] The number of young women participating in the interviews was a follows: Ripley School – five; Pearson College – seven; Greenwood School – nine; Careers Guidance – nine; Youthworks – three.

[2] All names of the schools described are pseudonyms as are the names of young women and practitioners quoted.

could have been explored for example leisure spaces, consumption spaces, and family spaces. As such the identities examined in this study must be interpreted as specific identities produced within the context of education, career, skills building, training and so forth.

Site 1: Ripley School

Participant's Name	*Age*	*Ethnic Origin*
Anna	18	White
Emilia	17	White
Katy	18	Asian
Sasha	17	Asian
Shayne	17	Asian

Ripley school is a county secondary school for pupils in the 11 to 18 age range. The school has over 1270 students and with over 200 students the sixth form is one of the largest in the city. In 1974 the school was formed in a merger of separate boy's and girl's grammar schools. The school is now a co-educational comprehensive maintained by the local education authority. The curriculum for students past age 16 includes a wide range of A-level subjects and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQ) in Business, Health and Social Care, and Leisure and Recreation. The school was described by the Head of Sixth form as being located in a very middle class area in an area that is highly sought after suburb to live in. Students from this suburb attend the school but the traditional catchment area also extends into city centre districts that are traditionally working class areas with low cost and high density housing. In the past 25 to 30 years these areas have become established centres for the Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities. The school also provides services to a number of students from a white working class area of the city. The gender mix is roughly equal between young men and young women.

Although the school is attended by a diverse student population at age sixteen the Head of Sixth Form explained that a lot of children from working class backgrounds leave the school with the ones staying on into sixth form being predominantly middle class and predominantly white although not exclusively. The

number of vocational courses on offer at the school has been expanding over the past 7 or 8 years in order to meet the different needs of the students, however, the structures of the courses still tend to favour the middle class students. For students who stay on at Ripley the academic route of studying A-levels is the norm with about 28% undertaking a vocational qualification. For young women leaving the school at sixteen further education colleges in the city are better equipped to offer more vocational options than is possible at Ripley. The sixth form students, therefore, tend to be on a traditional academic path from GCSEs to A-levels through to university.

Shelley: Are most girls that are coming through sixth form, like the ones I talked to, are they on that traditional trajectory of A-levels, university and so on.
Mr. Preston: Yeah, yeah, which actually more and more people are doing now. When I went to university, a long time ago, it was only about 10 percent of the cohort, of my age group actually going on to university whereas it's more like a third now. So although obviously it's still class dominated there is certainly a lot more flexibility and a lot more opportunity. There's been an enormous expansion of higher education in the last 10 or 15 years. I mean really, if you want to go it's not too difficult because you don't just have to do it by getting A-levels. You can do it by GNVQs. There's a lot more courses on offer. There's more institutions really. So it is different.

In 1997, upon completion of statutory schooling, 29% of young women attending Ripley left to pursue further education at college, 63% stayed on at the school, 3% went directly into employment, 1% entered places on youth training schemes and the destination of the remaining 4% is unknown. In this same year, of the young women who completed sixth form at Ripley, 74% went on to study in higher education, 20% pursued employment, 3% went into further education and 3% returned to school[3].

The interviews at this school were conducted in June and July of 1997. The five young women interviewed were all completing their first year of sixth form in which they were all studying for A-levels. All of these young women planned to attend university upon completion of their a-level exams.

Shelley: Do you think staying on at school has been the right decision?

[3] These figures are reported in the 1998 Ripley School Prospectus.

Katy: I think it's a more academic route to get to where I want to be. Because I want to study theology staying on and doing A-levels is the best route. *(Katy, 18 years old).*

Shelley: Did you know you wanted to go on in school but it was just a question of what to study?
Shayne: Yeah I definitely wanted to go on. I've actually, as long as I can remember, wanted to go on to further education and after having a year in sixth form, even though it has been difficult, I still want to continue with education.
Shelley: Why have you chosen to go to university?
Shayne: I don't know but I think it is the best way to pursue a career. I believe in the theory that things can be taken away from you but you'll always have your qualifications. They are vital. I have got a part time job which is very good but I wouldn't want to rely on it at this stage in my life. *(Shayne, 17 years old).*

Site 2: Pearson College

Participant's Name	*Age*	*Ethnic Origin*
Caroline	19	White
Georgia	18	White
Jessica	19	White
Lynne	18	White
Prea	19	Asian
Raj	20	Asian
Shannon	18	White

Pearson College is a further education college that offers a wide range of different courses of study including GCSEs, A-levels and vocational courses. The college has a rather large catchment area that includes the entire city as well as surrounding villages. As explained by one of the course tutors young women who come this college do so for a variety of reasons.

Carol: We take girls on from age sixteen. They have to be sixteen to come here and so some are leaving school and see this as a different stage in their education or they feel that school didn't meet their needs so they'll try something else or schools don't do the courses we do so they come here and some see it as a means to an end to get a job after they complete the course because with Health and Social Care it's very specific. And then others do go on to university or to further training or to other courses as well. So again there's quite a mixture there.

The seven young women who were interviewed at this college were in the final stages of completing an Advanced General National Vocational Qualification in Health and Social Care. In addition to the GNVQ two of the seven young women interviewed were studying for an A-level in psychology. All of these young women planned to pursue higher education at university upon completion of the GNVQ. The GNVQ is a relatively new type of qualification but is fairly well established and recognised. It can be used for entry into higher education and is both vocational and academic in content. The GNVQ course in Health and Social Care at Pearson College tends to be a qualification that young women pursue. Some young men do take the course but they constitute a very visible minority. According to one of the course tutors most of the young women who come to the college to earn a qualification in Health and Social Care initially want to use it to gain entry into nursing or social work, however, their career goals to tend to diversify as they become aware of the range of career options available to them.

> *Carol:* I think that with the system we have now where there are more pathways, more routes – I think perhaps you are meeting more people's needs whereas the more traditional way, the more academic way, there were a lot of people who were very able but couldn't get it down on paper. I think they were being deprived of the same opportunities whereas the variety we have now I think is in some ways is a good thing but we've still got this difference between academic and vocational. One is usually seen as better than the other. We try to do the promotion for vocational approaches. They are good qualifications. It's a good qualification to get and it's recognised. It's just a different way of learning.

The young women that were interviewed expressed a wide range of reasons for doing the qualification and they had a variety of long term career goals. Many of them saw the GNVQ as more desirable than A-levels because it would provide a broader based education which was not strictly focused on academic subjects and included work placements. While there is the perception that Health and Social Work is a qualification that appeals to women because of its focus on 'caring', the majority of young women interviewed wanted to pursue careers that would not fit neatly into this characterisation. One girl wanted to work in probation, one in a prison, and two in the police force. Most of them saw the GNVQ as a route into higher education and the pursuit of long term career goals.

Shelley: Why did you choose this course?
Caroline: Well I was going to do my A-levels and then I saw this course and it was new and it looked really interesting you know because it covered a wide range of aspects that I found interesting. And I thought it would be easier and so I went for it. *Shelley*: Has it been a good course for you?
Caroline: No. It has in some ways. It's made me more confident and I think that when I go to university I'll be more able to participate and if I have to stand up I'll be more confident...I'll be able to do that whereas in A-levels you don't really get that. But I don't like the running of the course and how it's graded and things. *(Caroline, 19 years old).*

Shelley: Why did you decide to take this course?
Shannon: Because instead of my A-levels - you can get a choice of 3 or 4 A-levels and they're just based like in economics you're just learning about economics and maths and you can't go very far but in a GNVQs it's broad based so you're covering like sciences, sociology, psychology, everything, interpersonal skills, working with people. So it covers a lot about what I wanted to go into. To go into nursing, to go into social work, that's what it's aimed at and then to go into working with people which is the interpersonal skills so I know I can work with people but A-levels are more subject based. Just dealing with subjects and not going outside of that. *(Shannon, 18 years old).*

Site 3: Greenwood School

Participant's Name	*Age*	*Ethnic Origin*
Alice	17	White
Laura	17	White
Lucinda	17	White
Lucy	17	White
Mel	16	White
Nicola	17	White
Nikky	16	White
Sarah	16	White
Sara C.	16	White

Greenwood School is a private all-girls school located in a small village outside of a large urban centre. As a private school there is no formal catchment area. The Head teacher explained that the girls who attend this school are ones who's parents have decided that they want a private education for their daughters

and necessarily are wealthy enough to provide this[4]. On the whole they are middle class and to them education is greatly valued. Besides education there is often the added interest of the 'social kudos' of having one's child at a private school.

Mrs. Conway: I hate to say it because it sounds terribly snobby to say it but it's the nouveau riche who feel this is a way of promoting the welfare of their children but whether it's educational or because of the social thing, whatever, it tends to be girls who are very precious to their parents, very well supported, give almost everything they want and certainly very solidly backed up by their parents.
Shelley: Some of them have been here quite long?
Mrs. Conway: That's right. Again very traditional expectations – it's an all girls' school where they will be given all the things little girls are expected to have. But most of all that they will be quote 'happy' which is absolutely impossible but that is the expectation and part of that tradition is that they arrive when they are 3 and they stay with us until they are 18 because of the security and the continuity and all the other things that we have.

The focus of the sixth form is traditional A-levels but there is the option of doing a GNVQ in business studies. Although some girls will leave at age 11 and age 15, the vast majority of the girls who come to Greenwood stay on after age 16 to do A-levels. The attrition is due more to financial than educational reasons. It is very rare for a girl at this school to leave and 'drop out'. Following A-levels about 96% of the girls from this school go on to university. Nine young women who were in their first year of sixth form were interviewed. All of them planned to pursue higher education upon completion of their studies at Greenwood. The tendency was to speak highly of their experience of being at this school because of it's small size, the individual attention they received and the sense of security they have there.

> *Lucy:* It's just so small and nice and everyone is just friendly and it feels like the teachers are actually concerned about but like at the school I went to before it was like they were just there do their job and that was it, just not bothering with you and the GCSEs I walked away with I don't think were as good as I could have got here. *(Lucy, 17 years old).*

> *Sarah C. :* This school is such a small place compared to other schools and here you get treated like individuals and it's all close and everyone knows your name and everything. In university it's not like that and I'm scared because I've been here since I was six and I don't know anything different really. *(Sarah C., 16 years old)*

[4] The cost of fees per term is 1698 pounds.

Nikky: I've been here since I was 4 years old. There are five of us who have been here since then. I've been here all my life and never changed schools or anything. So I'm used to it. I couldn't change like at sixth form some people go on to other schools but I couldn't do it because I'm so adapted to it. *(Nikky, 16 years old).*

Site 4: Centre for Careers Guidance

Participant's Name	*Age*	*Ethnic Origin*
Brenda	19	White
Claire	16	White
Emma	16	White
Kitty	18	White
Lauren	19	White
Lianne	16	White
Michelle	16	White
Morgan	18	White
Victoria	17	White

The guidance centre is located in the city centre and is open during weekdays on a drop in basis. The organisation, which employs over 100 people, is a limited company that works in partnership with public sector and private organisations. They are responsible for providing comprehensive programmes of careers education and guidance to young people aged 14 to 19 within the city under contract to the DfEE. Services offered include: information on options for school leavers; interviews with careers counsellors to review career interests; help in finding a place in continuing education; employment or training; help in making applications to employment or training; and advice on benefits. Diane, a guidance counsellor at the centre who works with young people who have left school describes the client population as follows:

Diane: We tend to get the young people who have perhaps fallen out of the system early on in their education and often for reasons of benefits are coming in as a starting point. Then we will tend to see the ones who have dropped out of their first choices and are perhaps debating as to what to do next or felt very sure when they first left school then have either dropped out of the course or dropped out of training or lost the job for whatever reason. We are seeing an increasing number of people who are perhaps in work but want to change direction. They feel they have been doing something for awhile but don't want to give it up until they've got

something else but really do feel the need to change direction and that's a growing group.

Besides assisting young women with careers and training advice the centre is implicated in the benefits system. Young people aged between 16 and 18 are not eligible to claim benefit unless they register with the careers service first as being available for either work or training. If they are estranged from parents, which Diane explained constituted a growing number of young people, then they will be able to claim benefits but only on the condition of registering. This also means that the Careers Centre is involved in the policing of claims as they are required to give information regarding compliance to the local authority.

For young women who leave school at age 16 the options fall mainly into 3 categories: full-time work, full time college, or an apprenticeship program. Many of the young women interviewed knew for quite some time that they would leave as soon as they completed statutory schooling while for others it was a matter of pursuing forms of training other than A-levels. As Diane explains many school leavers decide to leave well before year 11 and will have dropped out of the pattern of attendance for reasons that might be personal, social, behavioural or financial.

> *Diane:* I think with some of the young women who come in they want their independence financially and they want to actually have a career path. They're not generally looking for something that is just a means of earning some money immediately although obviously sometime that is the case. A lot of the young women we see are certainly interested in what the prospects are for them if they entered a particular career area so they have been looking ahead rather than just to the immediate.
> *Shelley:* Do they want to progress through a career path?
> *Diane:* Yeah and use the practical approach to learning rather than being in college or back at school.

Nine young women were interviewed at the careers guidance centre[5]. They had all

[5] In this site the young women were approached and invited to participate in an interview while they were waiting for their appointment with a guidance counsellor. The interview was to be scheduled following their appointment with the guidance counsellor which meant an infringement on their free time and in many instances the amount of time they had to wait to see counsellors was very lengthy which discouraged them from agreeing to an interview with me. Initially it proved very difficult to get the young women to agree to participate and, therefore, it was decided that a five pound gift voucher for a clothing shop or a record store would be offered as a compensation for the time they would give by

left school at age 16. Three of them had come seeking information about training, two of them were going start college in a couple of months but wanted to find jobs in the interim, two had completed a training course and now wanted to find work and two, having just left school, identified finding a job as their main goal. Compared to the young women at both Ripley School and Pearson College, these young women tended to express an antipathy to education.

> *Shelley:* Why did you decide to leave school?
> *Lianne:* I didn't like it. I hated it actually. It was too boring. I didn't want to do the subjects I'd chosen. I changed my mind, just wanted to get a job and leave school. Don't want to go back.
> *Shelley*: You want to get a job?
> *Lianne*: Yeah.
> *Shelley:* Why did you come down to careers guidance?
> *Lianne:* I wanted to know about OPEX training you know, get a job where I can get training as well instead of going to college. *(Lianne, 16 years old).*

> *Shelley:* Why did you decide to leave school?
> *Victoria:* Because I wanted to go straight into work, meet other people, different people from what I already know in school.
> *Shelley:* Why have you come down to careers guidance?
> *Victoria:* Because I'm interested in working in the travel industry but I don't really know where to go or where to look so I came down so they could help me find a place. *(Victoria, 17 years old).*

> *Shelley:* Why did you decide to leave school?
> *Morgan:* I didn't want to do further education from school because I hated the school. I hated school. I did really well in school but I didn't like it. I was bullied and hated it and just everything about it was horrid. I hated it.
> *Shelley:* So why have you come to guidance today?
> *Morgan:* Because I don't know what I want to do for a career. I'm just stuck like, 'what do I want to do?', you know. I need to get some advice. *(Morgan, 18 years old).*

Site 5: YouthWorks: Outreach and Training Programs

Participant's Name	*Age*	*Ethnic Origin*
AJ	20	White
Joanne	19	White
Louise	21	White

YouthWorks is a charitable organisation that has been in operation for over

---

participating in an interview.

ten years with the main purpose of providing services to young women who face social exclusion for a number of different reasons. The emphasis in the programmes they operate is on building confidence and self esteem through outdoor pursuits and group activities. Recently funding was obtained to launch a training program where young women can participate in team building skills, confidence building, job search skills, work placements, art workshops, communication skills and importantly have child care facilities provided. A promotional pamphlet for this programme states:

> *[the programme] came about because we realised there was little developmental provision for the most disadvantaged groups of young women. Women who do not know what their next life choices are or could be but may be at a stage where they are in danger of having choices taken away from them. They may not be ready for a job or formal education is inaccessible or alien to them, they may feel having children gives them no choices or the only choices they have are self destructive...The type of woman we work with may have young children, she may have just left prison or care, she may be using drugs, she may be homeless – there are hundreds of reasons why young women need positive role models, practical help and the chance to develop their dreams.*

The organisation is designed to work with young women from age 14 onward. Young women may be referred to the organisation but part of the organisation's activities centre on community outreach where contact is made with young women. This is done by a number of youth workers. For example there is a youth worker whose focus centres upon Afro-Caribbean girls, a youth worker who works with Asian girls and two drugs and alcohol workers. A number of the staff also work within other youth provision organisations and may come into contact with young women in this capacity. The activities of the organisation are promoted in youth drop-in centres as well. In general the young women who become involved in the activities of YouthWorks may come into contact with the organisation through a variety of different means.

The main structure of service provision is through weekly group meetings where young women can come for advice and support. The goal for these groups is to work together on the issues that are most relevant to the members. The group is mediated by a youth worker who facilitates this process. At various points

throughout the year the groups that have formed will congregate at a outdoor centre to participate in activities like rock climbing, canoeing and absailing. Geri, one of the youth workers explains:

> *Geri:* Even if a young woman doesn't turn up to one of the regular groups and then does turn up, she wouldn't be excluded. She would always be included in the group so what that means it's sometimes difficult to get a group to gel but we do try to keep them as regular things.
> *Shelley:* What about those groups that meet regularly – is there a goal with that? It isn't like a program with a start and a finish?
> *Geri:* No. I think it depends very much on the individual worker who is working with the group and it tends to be to let them set their own agenda. You would start the group and the group would make their own ground rules and would have their own ideas about what they wanted they do. Really it's about developing the group so that the same people will come every week and will want to come and will trust you enough to come and that can take a long, long, long time. But eventually the idea is to actually to be able to take them off and take them away or take them out of their own environment. Depending on which group you are working with that can take a very long time.
> *Shelley:* So the groups can be about whatever issues they have – confidence or whatever?
> *Geri:* Yeah those issues and obviously with a large number of staff people are more interested in other things. Like myself and one of the other workers are interested in body image. Certainly our Black girls worker that is a lot of what her work is based around because she feels that's what is important for the girls that she works with because of their culture and what it's like growing up as a young black girl in Chilton. So she spends a lot of time doing that. It might be that somewhere else the issues will be around alcohol and drugs and that can depend on where you work within a city as well as the groups of young women.

Three young women who had involvement with the YouthWorks services were interviewed[6]. Two of these young women had come into contact with the program when a youth worker came to the Young Mum's group they had been attending and told them about the services made available to young women through YouthWorks.

---

[6] In general the young women for whom this organisation provided services were extremely reluctant to talk to me. Only three young women who were involved in the activities organised by this outreach programme would agree to an interview although more were approached. Their scepticism contrasted significantly with Ripley School, Pearson College, and Greenwood School where the young women were eager to participate. Indeed it was very difficult to gain entry into a site that provided services for young women who are marginalised. Various youth workers who were contacted about this project explained that it took an extremely long time for these young women to build a level of trust that allows them to open up about their experiences. To interview more young women with this

These two young women became involved with the YouthWorks program and felt very positive about their experience. The other young woman interviewed was living in hostel for young women which one the of the programme's workers visited to encourage young women to get involved with YouthWorks activities. This young woman was struggling with drug addiction and her daughter was living her parents under an interim care agreement. Her immediate priority was to enter into drug rehabilitation so that she might eventually be able to undergo an assessment by the court and have her daughter back in her own custody.

> *Shelley:* Why did you end up getting involved? What was there about it that you thought was good for you?
> *Joanne:* When I fell pregnant with Jason a lot of people said, 'She's not going to do nothing with her life. Now she's ruined her life'.
> *Shelley:* They sort of said, 'Oh her life is over'.
> *Joanne:* Yeah because I had the baby so it was like I wanted to get more grades so I've got more things to aim for. So I thought I might as well do this. I'm not doing nowt else and try my hardest at it and it did because I got a job through it.
> *Shelley:* So your job was the result of your involvement with YouthWorks?
> *Joanne:* Yeah. *(Joanne, 19 years old).*

> *Shelley*: Why did you decide to come to Youthworks?
> *AJ*: Because there was a lot on offer and I thought it would actually do Kristy [her 2 year old daughter] some good to actually go into a creche and learn things rather than just be stuck at home. I was thinking of Kristy but there was a lot of things for me to do as well. Like confidence building and outside activities that sounded good.
> *Shelley*: Looking back over the past year what's the biggest change in your life then?
> *AJ*: Probably getting more confident. That's the biggest thing. Having the confidence to absail, and climb and canoe. That was really scary that was! They were big things and I just wouldn't have thought I'd do things like that at all. If I hadn't come here I don't think I would have done climbing or absailing or canoeing. I don't think I'd have had the chance to do all that. And getting up to do that conference as well. That was big thing to do – get up in front of ninety people that you don't know. *(AJ, 20 years old).*

Analysis Strategies

All of the interview tapes were transcribed producing a mass of data to sort and analyse. NU*DIST software was employed as a tool for organising the data for

---

kind of experience an ethnographic approach would have been required.

purposes of analysis. The first step was to code each interview according to the broad themes noted above around which the interview questions were clustered e.g. life planning; ideals and influences; gender equality and so on. All of these initial codes linked back to broad theoretical concepts and research questions as each of these thematic clusters which constituted the interview schedule related to specific theoretical issues. Once the data was divided into cross sections according to these first codes it became possible to begin to ask questions about the identities under construction. So for example interview data that related to how choices might be limited were used as a way into understanding how difference operates. Existing theories were then read using the data as a lens. The data were then further broken down into themes and coded according to emergent themes as a means to refining theoretical strategies for reading the data. The chart in appendix three represents in a broad sense the logic used to move from key theoretical concepts to specific research questions. This strategy for constructing interview questions was particularly useful in organising the development of thematic codes that would aid in engaging critically with theoretical concepts.

Appendix Two: Youth Transitions in Shifting Social Conditions

In the following discussion the study of youth will be located within the historical context of social relations and institutions that have transformed and shifted over the past thirty years. These transformations have been interpreted as significant in their impact upon the routes into adulthood available to young people. The impact of a fragmentation of these routes has been such that experiences of young people are now increasingly seen as destandardised and individualised. This suggestion will be explored directly in relation to the lives of young women.

Dramatic social changes which occurred during the period from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s presented many new challenges to the study of youth. More specifically a variety of structural transformations impacted upon the trajectories that young people followed into adulthood. The transition to adulthood had been rather uniform and relatively straightforward prior to the mid 1970s. For example, the two main routes available to young people were to leave school at 16 and go straight into full time employment or to continue with post compulsory education. It became apparent to youth researchers, however, that such trajectories were becoming more fragmented and complex in view of a number of economic and social transformations. It could no longer be assumed that young people would follow the predictable, short, simple, and clearly defined patterns that had been the norm previously (Roberts *et al.* 1994:44). The main factors that impacted upon options available to young people include post industrialisation and post fordism, economic recession, changes to welfare provision, and the introduction of new training programs.

Post Industrialisation

The impact of the changing structure of the economy was reflected throughout the 1980s in high levels of youth unemployment. Opportunities for young people as a consequence narrowed. In the previous labour market, characteristic of a Fordist social structure, there was a high demand for unskilled labour within large scale industrial enterprise. School leavers could expect to find

full time employment and, especially for working class youth, this was a common route taken in the school to work transition. As the manufacturing sector continued to decline, the service sector grew in an economy increasingly conceptualised as 'Post-Fordist'. Further characteristics of this new economic structure included a growth in part-time and non-standard work, an increased demand for technical skills and 'flexible specialisations', and employment in smaller work units (Kumar quoted in Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 28).

These factors in combination with an economic recession resulted in the collapse of the youth labour market in the 1980s. With this collapse the number of young people leaving school at 16 declined. In 1988, around 52 per cent of the school year cohort entered the labour market at the minimum age compared to 42 per cent in 1990 and just 34 per cent in 1991 (Payne quoted in Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:29). Since the 1970s youth unemployment has increased generally. From 1977 to 1993 unemployment among 16-17 year olds rose from 9 per cent to 13 per cent for males and 14 per cent for females. For young people in the 18-24 age group, unemployment rose from 7 per cent for males to 18 percent while for females the rate rose from 6 per cent to 11 per cent (OPCS, 1995).

The collapse of the youth labour market impacted policy in a number of ways. One very significant outcome was the expansion of government sponsored training programs for youth. A number of new schemes were introduced aimed primarily at early school leavers without jobs to go to. These included the Job Creation Programme, Youth Opportunities Programme and the Youth Training Scheme. Furlong and Cartmel argue that for young people leaving school at age 16 and 17 the introduction of these new schemes was one of the most significant changes affecting transitional patterns (1997:31). These kinds of government training schemes became an increasingly common component of the school to work transition for school leavers.

Another significant policy change that affected early school leavers was the withdrawal of social security benefits from school leavers aged 16 and 17 in 1988. In a speech at the 1989 Tory Party conference, Margaret Thatcher remarked in reference to the withdrawal of benefits to young school leavers that, "At 16

unemployment should not be an option" (quoted in Griffin, 1993:63). The main options left to most young people were to remain in full time education or take a place on a government training scheme (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:32; Griffin, 1993:63). In effect, for young people who could not rely on family support these training schemes became almost mandatory due to limited options. In 1979 70,000 young people were involved in such training schemes but by 1988 this figure swelled to 396,000 (Hollands, 1990:2).

Structural changes in the labour market and in the provision of benefits influenced patterns of participation in post compulsory education which rose in the period from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s. Changes in the labour market translated into the need for advanced educational qualifications and 'flexible specialisations'. This was reflected in the development of new types of educational options particularly vocational courses such as the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ). The time when academic qualifications were unnecessary had passed and the trend for the majority of young people to spend a greater number of years in educational settings acquiring qualifications needed to enter the labour market began. Generally educational experiences for young people changed considerably. Since 1972, when the minimum school-leaving age was raised to 16, the average length of time spent in school has continued to rise for all social groups (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:13). In 1973/74, 33 per cent of 16-year-old males participated in full time education. In the same years 37 per cent of females were in full time education. By 1993/94, the percentages rose for males to 70 per cent and to 76 per cent of females (DES 1985; DFE 1994). By 1991 the route of leaving school without qualifications to enter the labour market had virtually disappeared. Unqualified school leavers accounted for only 6 per cent of young people in that year (CSO, 1994)[1].

The political background of structural change at this time was formed by the rise of New Right ideologies in Britain under the rule of Margaret Thatcher and in the USA under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. For young people this meant that

[1] This increased need to acquire qualifications suggests that cultural capital has become increasingly significant in the reproduction of social inequality (Zinneker, 1990 quoted in Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:13).

the school to work transition was occurring within a political and ideological context that placed increasing emphasis upon individual responsibility. This political ideology was apparent in the introduction of free market principles into education. Rather than regard education as a means through which equality of opportunity could be increased, commodification turned education into a product that could be bought. The 1980 Education Act gave the right to parents to choose which school their child would attend. This was followed in 1991 with the Parent's Charter which made available information about school performance in the form of league tables, prospectuses, annual reports from school governors, reports from school inspectors and student progress reports based upon testing at key stages (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:18).

One implication of this legislation that causes concern is that by giving parents greater choice about where their child receives their education any negative outcomes can be attributed to bad choices on the part of parents as consumers. The impact of increased choice for parents has been studied by Ball et. al. (1996:110) who concludes that choice is directly related to social class differences and is a significant factor in maintaining and reinforcing social class divisions and inequalities. New Right ideology has effectively masked the reproduction of inequality through principles of meritocracy and opportunity and the notion of a 'classless' society. Bates and Riseborough (1993:3) discuss this New Right rhetoric as the 'New Embourgeoisement Thesis': that everyone is capable of getting on, becoming 'middle class', if they have the talent, apply themselves in the pursuit of education and work hard in their jobs. They argue,

> New Right rhetoric was finely tuned to a social context characterised by a lethal combination of growing injustice and growing individualisation, a context which the Conservatives had themselves helped to create. The 'classless' society discourse incorporated and solved the problem of social injustice, combining a frank *recognition* of inequality with an apparently graspable solution at the individual level...Through talent, enterprise and hard work, individual could create their own material and social success (Bates and Riseborough, 1993:4).

A number of studies of youth transitions in the 1980s found that many young people expressed this world view. Roker (1993:135) in a study of young women

attending private school, concluded that many of these young women believed British society was based upon individual opportunity. Success was possible for everyone provided they worked hard enough. The extent of one's success was limited only by a lack of individual effort and/or ability. In short, the attitude was espoused that individuals are responsible for determining and improving their life chances. Similarly, in a study of young people involved in a vocational training course, Riseborough (1993:43) found that regardless of social class background, all of the students subscribed to a view of the social order being based upon opportunity and relatively open access, and success, contingent only upon one's own level of determination. In this respect the world view of these students endorsed the existing social order.

By the 1990s it was apparent that all of these structural changes combined to have a profound impact on the experiences of young people. The reorganisation of the economy had resulted in limited employment opportunities but also opened up a range of training programs as an alternative to further education. Acquiring qualifications had increased in importance due to a need for skilled workers and new vocational programs were made available to young people in response. The pursuit of non compulsory education became more prevalent while the number of young people leaving school at 16 to go into full-time employment diminished. The viability of leaving school was further curbed by changes made to the provision of benefits by the Conservative government. Such policies, reflecting the rise of New Right political ideologies were part of an overall social environment where meritocracy and individualism were prominent. The values and world views of young people began to reflect this. In summary, the route to adulthood was no longer as straightforward as it once it had been. Young people were faced with having to choose from more options in an environment that placed emphasis upon individual choice and responsibility for success as well as failure.

Effects of Structural Transformations: Destandarisation and Individualisation

One of the most important effects of the kinds of structural transformations discussed here, is that for young people over the course of the past twenty years, the

experience of the school to work transition has become destandardised and individualised. This has led some researchers to explore the relationship between youth transitions and social change from the perspective of 'reflexive modernisation' (Beck, 1992). Within late modernity, processes of modernisation result in a change in the relationship between social structures and individual agency so that individuals become less constrained by the traditional parameters of industrial society that operate through relations such as class, gender, and family roles. A 'surge of individualisation' occurs as these former social bonds erode and an increasingly diverse range of lifestyle options become available to the individual but must be negotiated often without the benefit of sources of traditional authority (Giddens, 1991). Individual subjectivity becomes more important than collective identity as people put themselves at the centre of their own life plans (Beck, 1992). Identities that used to be ascribed are replaced with reflexively constructed biographies and the self becomes a project open to constant reinterpretation.

This thesis has implications for the study of youth especially for theorising social reproduction which remains a concern in the study of the transition of youth into adulthood. Furlong and Cartmel (1997:1) assert that over the last two decades the experiences of young people in industrialised societies have changed significantly and have impacted upon relationships with family and friends, experiences in education and the labour market, leisure and lifestyles and the ability to become established as independent young adults. As a consequence young people today, regardless of social background or gender, must confront a set of choices which for the most part were unknown to their parents. The fragmentation of social structures leads to a more individualised experience of the transition to adulthood and the routes available for young people to follow become less predictable. Opportunities have grown, a greater degree of choice is possible and the bases for individual identity have multiplied. For example, within education new kinds of courses such as GNVQs provide a route into the labour market or as alternate to a-levels as a route into higher education. Similarly, a variety of different training schemes present options to school leavers.

The assertion that social conditions for young people have transformed in the past 20 years is not seen as being particularly problematic, however, the extent to

which these changes have produced the effects argued by Beck and Giddens remains a contentious issue Much of the debate revolves around the tension between social structure and individual agency. If social structures have fragmented, thereby producing greater diversity and freeing up social agents from the constraints of an ascribed identity, structural analyses may need to re-evaluate processes involved in social reproduction in terms of the key explanatory variables often employed such as gender and class. The main area of debate centres upon the extent to which factors previously understood as defining the parameters of individual life chances still operate. Irwin (1995:3) argues that despite evidence of change in the experience and organisation of youth transitions into adulthood, it is premature to suggest that these changes amount to 'destandardisation' or that youth is losing its coherence as a life course stage. Furlong and Cartmel (1997:2) assess Beck's thesis and conclude that 'late modernity revolves around an epistemological fallacy: although social structures, such as class, continue to shape life chances, these structures tend to become increasingly obscure as collectivist traditions weaken and individualist values intensify'. They argue that life chances and processes of social reproduction remain highly structured even though the subjective experience of social structures may have become more individualised. They conclude, therefore, that late modernity is characterised by an expanding disjuncture between objective conditions and subjective experience and that diversification within education or labour market experiences serves to obscure the fact that these experiences remain highly structured.

Similar arguments have been put forward by Jones and Wallace (1990) who agree, on the one hand, with Beck and Giddens that youth experiences have become increasingly destandardised yet maintain that this does not indicate the diminished impact of traditional structural constraints. Young people tend to remain in higher education and training for a longer period of time due to the increasing need for qualifications and technical competence. The routes to employment, therefore, have become both extended and more complex. Structural changes have also been accompanied by shifts in individual attitudes and more varied experiences of family structures. Leisure and lifestyles options have expanded providing diverse bases for identity. Opponents of the modernisation theses argue, however, that these transformations and increased diversity, far from reflecting freedom of choice and

'individualisation', instead introduce new forms of traditional patterns of inequality . These new configurations of inequality are still rooted in capitalist and patriarchal social structures (Jones and Wallace, 1990: 142).

Jones and Wallace (1990:137) criticise modernisation theory for treating 'youth' as a unitary concept not taking into account empirical findings that are group specific. They argue that the risks, opportunities, and choices proposed by Giddens and Beck are not uniformly distributed but continue to be patterned along traditional axes of inequality. For example, opportunities vary by class as well as 'race' and ethnicity which receive inadequate attention in this model. This same deficiency applies to gender based differences. Routes to adulthood are not individualised but can continue to be predicted based upon these structural variables. This argument leads to the conclusion that long established forms of class and gender inequality are now being reproduced in new ways (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Jones and Wallace, 1990).

Cohen also supports this position in his argument that in advanced capitalist societies the distinction between class cultures remains but that the forms in which that division is reproduced have changed by becoming more complex and fragmented. The reproduction of social divisions is no longer explainable solely in terms of the occupational structure or the educational system. Class positions for instance are rarely lived in an unmediated form but are experienced through a series of non-class positions which they invisibly connect and inflect at the level of cultural reproduction (Cohen, 1990:225-227).

Despite these cautious assessments of processes of modernisation and individualisation some support for the modernisation thesis has been found. The most common finding that lends support is the tendency for young people to engage reflexively in constructing their own biographies, demonstrating a strong degree of individualism, accompanied by a weak sense of collective identity. Young people seem to place themselves at the centre of their own life plans at the expense of identifying with social ties and traditions (Bates, 1993:82). Evans and Rudd (1998) in their study of the experiences of young people in vocational further education found that young people were clearly aware of possible structural influences but

they placed primary emphasis on their own individual efforts. Chisholm and du Bois-Reymond (1993) in their study of transitions of young women in Britain and the Netherlands found that an individualisation of expectations on the part of young women has taken place.

Young Women and Social Change

The way in which the transition of youth into adulthood has been socially organised and constructed has always been gendered, therefore, the ways in which structural changes have altered this transition have had a significant gendered dimension. There have been a number of structural transformations since the early 1970s that have impacted gender relations and are particularly relevant to understanding the position of young women in the late 1990s. Women have increasingly moved from the private into the public sphere - this movement being most apparent within the realms of education and paid employment. Within the area of paid employment there has been a significant restructuring of job opportunities available for women. The percentage of employees in Britain who were female rose from 38% in 1971 to 49.6% in 1995 indicating a substantial increase in women's economic activity[2]. The most dramatic changes have been in the participation rates of married women which rose from 26% in 1951 to 71% in 1991 (quoted in Walby, 1997:27). The wage gap between men and women has also declined steadily since the early 1970s although this has happened in full time work only. In 1970 women earned only 63% of men's full time wage but by 1995 this gap had narrowed to 80%. (Walby, 1997:31). The restructuring of employment opportunities for women is further reflected in the decline of occupational segregation within certain areas. Significantly, in the period between 1975 and 1994, men's monopolisation of the top professional and managerial positions decreased. Women have been able to move into the upper socio-economic levels of

[2] This increase is mainly due to an increase in women's participation in part-time work which generally is lower paid than full time work and involves poorer working conditions but as Walby (1997:34) argues, 'for the purposes of understanding changing gender relations in people's lives and experiences, it is more important to focus on the experience of having a job. Part-time work should not be dismissed as something done by 'grateful slaves' who have little commitment to work, but recognised as a distinctive form of employment with its own significance for the position of women in society and for the restructuring of employment relations for both women and men'.

managerial, administrative and professional jobs for which university qualifications constitute an effective entry prerequisite. This increase in women's participation in upper level socio-economic positions has been accompanied by a decrease in sex segregation in the lower levels (Walby. 1997:34-35)[3]. The higher the occupational order, the more likely an increase in both the absolute and relative numbers of women. In summary, there has been a restructuring of opportunities for women that has significantly transformed their positions within employment.

The dramatic transformation of the position of women within paid employment can be attributed to three key structural changes. Firstly, equal opportunities legislation and equal opportunity policies have reduced discrimination against women. A variety of sex equality legislation measures have been passed since the early 1970s as a result of a number of factors that include: pressure from organised women's trade unions; pressure to ratify the 1951 International Labour Organisation on equal pay; the support of a woman Minister of State, Barbara Castle; and the requirements of membership of the European Union (Walby, 1997:38).

Secondly, transformations in employment opportunities for women are directly linked to the increase in educational participation and acquisition of qualifications by women. There is a significant relationship between level of education and likelihood of involvement in paid work. In 1994 among women aged 20-29 with higher educational qualifications, 89% were working and 4% were economically inactive. However, among the same age group lacking educational qualifications, only 33% were active and 56% economically inactive (Walby, 1997:41). Girls in the contemporary context are gaining more educational qualifications than their male counterparts. This is an important point as knowledge in an increasingly significant factor in social change and economic development (Drucker, 1993 quoted in Walby, 1997:41).

Historically, the underachievement of young women in academic settings

[3] While sex segregation has decreased in the upper levels jobs significant sex segregation in employment remains. Employees in most occupations are still of the same sex. See the discussion by Walby (1997:34-36).

provided the focus for analysis. Girls did do better than boys at the primary school level but were then surpassed, never regaining their advantage. In the 1970s, the tendency was for young women to acquire fewer school-leaving qualifications and they were underrepresented in universities (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:22). However, this is no longer the case. Young women are now outperforming young men at primary school, secondary school, and into higher education. They are getting better results in both GCSEs and A-levels and are more likely to enter higher education. Additionally they are making gains in entry to traditionally male-dominated fields[4] (Roberts, 1995:47). As recently as ten years ago it was young men who held the advantage in educational attainment. Now young women are more likely than men to participate in further education (Walby, 1997:44).

Increasing educational achievements by women, however, do not apply uniformly. The decreasing gender gap in educational attainment pertains primarily to younger women and is less relevant in the case of older women. Walby (1997) stresses the significance of age in assessing the impact of structural transformations on the position of women. The younger the age at which a woman attains her qualifications, the better off her position tends to be in relation to men. Therefore, the advantages brought by educational attainment to women's position in employment are restricted primarily to younger women as younger women are more likely to have qualifications. Young women have been able to more readily gain access to education that older women. Amongst older men and women the differences in qualifications remain. For example, in 1994 in the age group 50-59, 54% of women held no formal educational qualification compared to only 33% of men. Amongst 16 to 24 year olds, however, the number of women holding no educational qualifications was 19% and for men 20% (Walby, 1997:47). Walby concludes that there can be no sweeping statement about women catching up with men but that this is a generationally specific phenomenon.

The third factor that has contributed to women's improved position within employment is the declining significance of domestic activities for some women, in particular, younger women who are moving into top jobs (Walby, 1997:50). Events

[4] Despite their significant entry into these non-traditional areas, women are still

such as marriage, childbirth, and child care have traditionally played a key role in determining women's participation in paid employment. This influence has less impact in today's context (ibid.). For example, the economic activity rate of women with dependant children has increased form 49% in 1974 to 65% in 1994. Women with children under 4 years of age have increased their economic activity rates from 27% in 1973 to 52% in 1994[5]. There is no longer a decrease in women's economic participation rates associated with early child care.

The structural transformations discussed here have impacted greatly upon gender relations. Since the entry of women into the public sphere and the realm of politics, education and employment women's positions within that sphere have improved. This is a particularly valid outcome in relation to the position of young women today who are currently making choices about education, employment and children but less so for older women who have already made these kinds of decisions (Walby, 1997:63). Young women have a greater range of educational opportunities which they are seizing. This expansion of choices and opportunities is evident within the employment realm as well especially at the upper levels of occupations. The success of young women in both education and employment is further enhanced by the declining impact of domesticity. All of these factors contribute to an environment in which young women are constructing their identities in relation to a diverse range of choices and opportunities, within the realms of education and training, career paths, domesticity, relationships, and consumer culture.

Conclusion

The study of youth has been concerned with theorising the reproduction of social divisions. Due to the extent and nature of social change in the past twenty years this focus remains. In the 1970s and into the 1980s tension existed between two fundamentally different constructions of youth. In the social reproduction debates around youth transitions, young people were cast as either passive victims, caught helplessly in the reproduction of existing social divisions, or as resisters of

---

underrepresented in certain subjects such as sciences (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:22).

oppressive conditions. Since the late 1980s it has been recognised that either construction is too simplistic to adequately address the complexity of young peoples' experiences. As Griffin (1993) points out this has led to a renewed interest in theorising the relationship between culture, agency and structure. Many recent studies of youth have explored this relationship using modernisation theory in which the work of Beck and Giddens plays a significant role. Within these studies tension exists between understanding the nature of objective social conditions in late modernity and the subjective experience of those conditions. Many researchers have been hesitant to support the idea that youth transitions have been destandardised. As Furlong and Cartmel (1997:112) conclude social divisions which were seen as shaping life chances in modernity are still central to an understanding of structured inequalities in late modernity. Social class and gender especially continue to structure the experiences of young people but have become more obscure due to the individualisation of experiences. On the other hand several studies have confirmed the individualistic nature of self identity in late modernity that is central to modernisation theory.

The expansion of equal opportunities in employment for women, the increased educational achievements of young women since the 1970s and the declining significance of domestic activities has significantly contributed to a social environment which makes the study of young women's identities in relation to the assumptions of modernisation theory particularly pertinent.

[5] See discussion in Walby (1997:50-51) for detailed statistics.

Appendix Three: Conceptualisation of Research Questions

THEORY→	KEY CONCEPTS→	RESEARCH QUESTIONS→	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Reflexive Modernisation Giddens, Beck, Lash	**Detraditionalisation** – post traditional order where people are free from social forms of industrial society, social transformation of modernity; freeing of agency from structure **Individualisation** – biography removed from determination and placed in individual's own hands; increasing proportion of life opportunities which are open increases (Beck, 1992:135); collective/group sources of meaning are exhausted (Beck,1994:7) **Reflexivity** – the more societies are modernised, the more agents/subjects acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and to change them in that way. (Beck, 1994)	Do young women perceive their lives in terms of having many choices within the various domains of their lives? careers, marriage and family, education, body, lifestyle, geographical location In what ways do young women feel responsible for their creating their own future and in what ways do they feel dependant or lack of control?	What is the most important decision you have made in the past year will make in the next year? - factors influencing this decision? - options to choose from in making this decision? - Pressures associated with making these decisions Is the future under your control? In what ways? Do you have any worries about the future? What kinds of things limit opportunities for young women? Have any of these things ever limited your opportunities/choices? What would you do if this happened?

Self-Identity and the Trajectory of the Self Giddens	**Reflexive Project of the Self** – the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self narratives; self observation; individual responsible for building and rebuilding coherent/rewarding sense of identity **Narratives** – interpretative self history produced by individuals is the core of self identity **Trajectory of Development** – self has coherence derived from cognitive awareness of various phases of life span vs. event s in the outside world **Body Awareness** – reflexivity extends to the body as part of an action system vs. passive object	How do young women construct a narrative of their life that reflects their sense of identity? What is the nature of this narrative? What experiences do young women identify as being central to their definition of who they are? In what ways do young women associate their body to their sense of self?	Where do you see yourself in: 1 year; 5 years; 10 years... If this doesn't happen then what will you do? What kinds of things might prevent you from achieving these goals? What are the main things you would change about yourself or your life if you could? What would these changes mean? What are some of the biggest changes that have happened to you in this past year? Do you ever feel that your body doesn't match with who you are inside? How would you change your body? How would these changes affect who you are? How does wanting to make these changes make you feel?

con't **Self-Identity and the Trajectory of the Self** Giddens	**Authenticity** – "true" vs. "false" self; moral dimension; be true to self	How is the "true self" defined?	Do you ever feel pressure to change who you are? Why why not? Where does this pressure come from? What kinds of things do you do to resist this pressure?
	Internally Referential – key reference points in the development of self set from inside in terms of how individual constructs her life history	How do young women negotiate the choices available to them in the various areas of their lives?	
	Choice - fundamental component of day-to-day living but with little help as to what options to select	What are the main areas of choice that they identify?	Scenarios regarding making choices amongst conflicting options
	Lifestyle and Life Planning – integrated set of routinised practices which give material form to narrative of self identity; unity; coherence, order lead to **ontological security**.	In what ways do they perceive their choices as limited?	
	Risk and Self Actualisation – balance between risk and opportunity, consciousness of risk as inherent	What effect does this range of choices have in terms of presenting risks and anxiety? How do they deal with this anxiety?	Is the future under your control? In what ways? Do you have any worries about the future? Do you worry about not being able to get a job?
	Pure Relationships – not based upon external factors but sought for what can be brought to individuals involved.	What factors do they identify as being important in their relationships with others (boyfriends, friends, family, etc.)	Relationship scenarios

Structuration Theory **Duality of Structure** Giddens	**Agency–** a) humans never passively accept external conditions b) appropriation occurs at the individual and collective levels c) large social systems do not form an uncontrollable background or environment **Structure** - rules and resources	What strategies do they use to overcome barriers to carrying out their life plans? What are the restraints that they experience which they identify as being external to themselves internal? What are the rules and resources they draw upon in constructing the self?	What will you do if you don't achieve your goals? What might prevent you from achieving your goals? What kinds of things give you confidence take away your confidence? Who do you consider to be a role model in your life? Why?
Post-structuralism Foucault, Weedon.	**Subject** –actor and acted upon **Subject position** – positions from which individuals actively interpret the world and by which they are governed; made available in discourses; identities as temporary attachments to subject positions (Hall, 1996) **Subjectivity** – site of conflicting and competing subject positions; product of participation in discursive practices; unstable; in process; not unified	In what ways do young women exercise choice and in what ways do they experience their choices as limited? Do they identify with dominant positions? What alternatives do they perceive to these dominant positions? What is the experience for young women of being positioned within discourses such as gender, ethnicity, location, and class?	Scenarios about conflicting choices?

con't **Post structuralism** Foucault, Weedon.	**Discursive practices** **Discourse** –historically variable ways of specifying knowledge and truth functioning as a set of rules, and the operation of these rules and concepts in programmes which specify what is or is not the case (Ramazanoglu, 1993); ways of constituting knowledge together with social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges. (Weedon, 199 **Technologies of the self** – practices and techniques through which individuals actively fashion their own identities (McNay, 1992) **Contradictions** – subject positions are internally contradictory; opens space for agency/choice; identities never singular but multiply discourses constructed across different and often intersecting and antagonistic , practices and positions (Hall, 1996) **Resistance** – subjects actively take up positions therefore are able to resist dominant positions	What are the practices that young women engage in through which they develop an identity? How do young women negotiate the many conflicting and contradictory elements which contribute to their project of the self? Do young women experience certain discourses as oppressive and if so, how do they resist?	Scenarios about conflicting choices? Do you feel pressure to change aspects of yourself? Where does this pressure come from? What do you do to resist this pressure? Has being a female ever been a factor that has stopped you from doing what you want? Example?

Identity Stuart Hall	**Identity**- meeting point between discourses and processes which produce subjectivities; temporary attachments to subject positions which discursive practices construct for us **Interpellation** – subject must be hailed by discourse and must invest in the position **Difference** – identities are constructed through difference/the Other	How is the self defined in relation to the other? Do young, white women identify themselves ethnically?	What kinds of things limit the opportunities young women have available? What kinds of things have limited your choices if any?
Feminist-poststructuralist debates **Foucault's influence**	**"Postfeminism"**- new identifications for young women; feminist/femininity as binary opposition (McRobbie, 1994); expanded opportunities and life choices **Agency** – debate over active or inscribed subject (tension). The subject is both constituted and constituting **Power and inequality** subjects of knowledge	How do young women define "feminism"? What does liberation, self-determination mean to young women? How do young women perceive the nature of power relations? What strategies do young women think are appropriate to overcoming inequality and power relations?	What is the definition of the "ideal woman" in our culture? Do you disagree with any aspect of this ideal? What is your definition of the ideal woman? Is your life going to be different from your Mom's life? How/Why Are men and women equal in our society? Why/why not? How has women's liberation affected the lives of men you know? Do you think things will change for women? How can inequality be overcome?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abercrombie, Nicholas; Hill, Stephen; and Turner, Bryan S. 1986. *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism,* London: Allen and Unwin.

Aggleton, Peter J. and Whitty, Geoff. 1985. "Rebels Without a Cause? Socialisation and Subcultural Style Among Children of the New Middle Classes", *Sociology of Education,* vol. 58:60-72.

Aggleton, Peter. 1994. "Sexuality In and Out of School", *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* vol. 15, no. 2:279-282.

Alcoff, Linda. 1988. "Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory", *Signs*, vol. 13, no. 3: 405-436.

Alcoff, Linda and Elisabeth Potter, eds. 1993. *Feminist Epistemologies,* London: Routledge.

Anthias, Floya and Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1990. "Contextualising Feminism – Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions", pp. 103-118 in Lovell, Terry, ed., *British Feminist Thought*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Anthias, Floya. 1999. "Theorising Identity, Difference and Social Divisions", pp.156-178 in O'Brien, Martin; Penna, Sue; and Hay, Colin, eds., *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Environment and Identity in Giddens' Social Theory*, London: Longman.

Bagguley, Paul. 1999. "Beyond Emancipation? The Reflexivity of Social Movements", pp. 65-82 in O'Brien, Martin; Penna, Sue; and Hay, Colin, eds., *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Environment and Identity in Giddens' Social Theory*, London: Longman.

Ball, S.J.; Bowe, R; and Gerwitz, S. 1996. "School Choice, Social Class and Distinction: The Realisation of Social Advantage in Education", *Journal of Educational Policy,* 11: 89-113.

Balsamo, Anne. 1995. "Forms of Technological Embodiment: Reading the Body in Contemporary Culture", *Body and Society*, vol. 1(3-4).

Banks, Michael; Bates, Inge; Breakwell, Glynnis; Bynner, John; Emler, Nicholas; Jamieson, Lynn; and Roberts, Kenneth. 1992. *Careers and Identities,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Barrett, Michèle. 1987. 'The Concept of "Difference"', *Feminist Review*, no. 26, (Summer):29-41.

Barrett, Michèle. 1992. "Words and Things: Materialism and Method in Contemporary Feminism", pp. 201-219 in Barrett, Michèle and Philips, Anne, eds., *Destabilizing Theory,* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Barrett, Michèle and MacIntosh, Mary. 1991. *The Anti-Social Family* (2nd edition), London: Verso.

Barrett, Michèle and Philips, Anne, eds. 1992. *Destabilizing Theory,* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Barthes, Roland. 1972. *Mythologies*, London: Jonathan Cape.

Bartky, Sandra. 1990. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression,* New York: Routledge.

Bates, Inge. 1993. "When I have My Own Studio...", pp. 70-83 in Bates, Inge and Riseborough, George, eds., *Youth and Inequality,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bates, Inge and Riseborough, George, eds. 1993. *Youth and Inequality,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1983a. *Simulations*, New York: Semiotext(e).

Baudrillard, Jean. 1983. *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, New York: Semiotext(e).

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1992. *Intimations of Postmodernity*, London: Routledge.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1993. Review of '*The Transformation of Intimacy*', *Sociological Review*, vol. 41:363-368.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1996a. 'Morality in the Age of Contingency', pp. 49-58 in Heelas, Paul; Lash, Scott and Morris, Paul, eds., *Detraditionalisation: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1996b. 'From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity', pp. 18-36 in Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity,* London: Sage.

Beck, Ulrich. 1987. "Beyond Status and Class: Will There Be an Individualised Class Society", in Meja, Volker; Misgeld, Dieter, and Stehr, Nico, eds., *Modern German Sociology,* New York: Columbia University Press.

Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *The Risk Society,* London: Sage Publications.

Beck, Ulrich and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. 1995. *The Normal Chaos of Love,* translated by Mark Ritter and Jane Wiebel, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, Ulrich and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. 1996. "Individualisation and 'Precarious Freedoms', pp. 23-48 in Heelas, Paul; Lash, Scott and Morris, Paul, eds., *Detraditionalisation: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Beck, Ulrich; Giddens, Anthony and Lash, Scott. 1994. *Reflexive Modernisation*, Cambridge: Polity.

Bellah, Robert N.; Madsen, Richard; Sullivan, William, M.; Swidler, Ann; Sullivan; and Tipton, Steven M. 1996. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life, updated edition,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. 1991. *Postmodern Theory*, London: Macmillan.

Betterton, Rosemary, ed. 1987. *Looking On*, New York: Pandora Press.

Bhavani, Kum-Kum; Kent, Kathryn, R; and Widdance Twine, France. 1998. "Editorial", *Signs,* vol. 23, no. 3 (Spring): 575-583.

Boles, Jaqueline. 1987. "Young Women From School to the Job Market", *Contemporary Sociology,* vol. 16, no. 3:338-339.

Bordo, Susan. 1986. "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought", *Signs*, vol. 11, no. 31: 439 - 456.

Bordo, Susan. 1993. *Unbearable Weight,* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* London: Routledge.

Bovey, Shelley. 1991. *The Forbidden Body*, London: Pandora.

Boyne, Roy. 1997. "Structuralism", pp. 194-220 in Turner, Bryan S., ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Boyne, Roy and Rattansi, Ali, eds. 1990. *Postmodernism and Society*, London: Macmillan.

Bradley, Harriet. 1996. *Fractured Identities: Changing Patterns of Inequality,* Cambridge: Polity.

Brah, Avtar. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora,* London: Routledge.

Braidotti, Rosi. 1991. *Patterns of Dissonance*, Cambridge: Polity.

Braidotti, Rosi. 1994. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory,* New York: Columbia University Press.

Bray, Abigail and Colebrook, Claire. 1998. "The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment", *Signs*, vol. 24, no. 11: 35- 67.

Brooks, Ann. 1997. *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms,* London: Routledge.

Brown, Jane D. and Laurie Schulze. 1990. "The Effects of Race, Gender, and Fandom on Audience Interpretations of Madonna's Music Videos", *Journal of Communication*, 40(2): 88-102.

Brownmiller, Susan. 1985. *Femininity,* New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Bruch, Hilda. 1979. *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia,* Wells: Open Books.

Bryman, Alan and Burgess, Robert G., eds. 1994. *Analysing Qualitative Data*, London: Routledge.

Budgeon, Shelley and Dawn Currie. 1995. "From Feminism to Postfeminism: Women's Liberation in Fashion Magazines", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 18. No. 2:173-186.

Burkitt, Ian. 1991. *Social Selves: Theories of the Social Formation of Personality,* London: Sage Publications.

Burr, Vivien. 1995. *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*, London: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1992. "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'", pp. 3-21 in Butler, Judith and Scott, Joan W., eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political,* New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that Matter*, London: Routledge.

Butler, Judith and Scott, Joan W. 1992. *Feminists Theorize the Political,* London: Routledge.

Calhoun, Craig, ed. 1994. *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Castells, Manuel. 1997. *The Power of Identity,* Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Central Statistical Office (CSO). 1994. *Social Trends*, 24, London: HMSO.

Chapkis, Wendy. 1986. *Beauty Secrets*, London: The Women's Press.

Cheal, David. 1991. *Family and the State of Theory,* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Chernin, Kim. 1983. *Womansize: The Tyranny of Slenderness*, London: Women's Press.

Chisholm, Lynne. 1990. "A Sharper Lens or a New Camera? Youth Research, Young People and Social Change", pp. 33-57 in Chisholm, Lynne; Büchner, Peter; Krüger, Heinz-Hermann; and Brown, Phillip, eds., *Childhood, Youth and Social Change: A Comparative Perspective,* London: The Falmer Press.

Chisholm, Lynne; Büchner, Peter; Krüger, Heinz-Hermann; and Brown, Phillip, eds. 1990. *Childhood, Youth and Social Change: A Comparative Perspective,* London: The Falmer Press.

Chisholm, Lynne and Du Bois-Reymond, Manuela. 1993. "Youth Transitions, Gender and Social Change", *Sociology,* vol. 27, no. 2: 259-279.

Clarke, John; Hall, Stuart; Jefferson, Tony; and Roberts, Brian. 1976. "Subcultures, Cultures, and Class", in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance Through Rituals,* London: Hutchinson and Co (Publishers) Ltd.

Clough, Patricia T. 1993. "On the Brink of Deconstructing Sociology", *Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1:169-182.

Coffey, Amanda and Atkinson, Paul. 1996. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data,* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cohen, Phil. 1997. *Rethinking the Youth Question,* Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Crompton. Rosemary. 1998. *Class and Stratification, 2nd Ed.,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Crompton, Rosemary; Gallie, D.; and Purcell, K. 1996. *Changing Forms of Employment: Organisations, Skills, and Gender,* London: Routledge.

Crowley, Helen and Himmelweit, Susan. 1992. *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Daly, Mary. 1984. *Pure Lust: Elements of Feminist Philosophy,* Boston: Beacon Press.

Davies, Bronwyn and Rom Harré. 1990. "Positioning: The Discursive Production of

Selves.", *Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 20, 1: 43-63.

Davis, Kathy. 1995. *Reshaping the Female Body*, New York: Routledge.

Davis, Lynn. 1986. "Young Women From School to the Job Market", *Educational Review,* vol. 38, no. 1: 83.

Dean, Mitchell. 1994. " 'A Social Structure of Many Souls:' Moral Regulation, Government and Self-formation", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, vol. 19, no. 2:145-168.

Delamont, Sara. 1987. "Review of Losing Out: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls", *Sociology of Health and Illness,* vol. 9, no. 4:454-455.

De Lauretis, Teresa. 1987. *Technologies of Gender,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Delueze, Gilles. 1992. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Brain Massumi, trans., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Department For Education (DFE). 1994. *Statistical Bulletin*, 10/94, London: HMSO.

Department For Education (DFE). 1994. *Statistical Bulletin*, 10/94, London: HMSO.

Department of Education and Science (DES). 1985. *Statistical Bulletin,* 5/85, London: HMSO.

Department of Education and Science (DES). 1985. *Statistical Bulletin,* 5/85, London: HMSO.

Derrida, Jacques. 1976. *Of Grammatology,* Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1978. *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques. 1982. *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Douglas, Susan J. 1994. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Females With the Mass Media,* London: Penguin.

Du Bois-Reymond, Manuela. 1998. "'I Don't Want to Commit Myself Yet': Young People's Life Concepts", *Journal of Youth Studies,* vol. 1, no. 1: 63-79.

Elam, Diane. 1994. *Feminism and Deconstruction,* London: Routledge.

Faludi, Susan. 1992. *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women,* London: Chatto & Windus.

Featherstone, Mike. 1991. "The Body in Consumer Culture", pp. 170-196 in Feathersone, Mike; Hepworth, Turner, Bryan S., *The Body: Social Processes and Cultural Theory,* London: Sage.

Featherstone, Mike and Burrows, Roger. 1995. *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment,* London: Sage.

Felski, Rita. 1989. "Feminist Theory and Social Change", *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 6:219-40.

Felski, Rita. 1997. "The Doxa of Difference". *Signs,* vol. 23, no. 11:11-22.

Flax, Jane. 1990. "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory", pp: 39-62 in Nicholson, Linda A., ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism,* New York: Routledge.

Flax, Jane. 1992. "Beyond Equality: Gender, Justice and Difference", pp. 192-209 in Bock, and James, S., eds., *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics, and Female Subjectivity*, London: Routledge.

Foster, Janet. 1987. "Review of *Losing Out: Sexuality and the Adolescent Girl", British Journal of Criminology,* vol. 27, no. 2:207-208.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*, London: Allen Lane.

Foucault, Michel. 1979. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1,* London: Allen Lane.

Foucault, Michel. 1982. "The Subject and Power", pp. 208-27 in Dreyfus, Hubert, and Rabinow, Paul, eds., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermenuetics*, Brighton: Harvester Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1986. *The Care of the Self,* London: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel. 1988. "Technologies of the Self" pp. 16-49 in Martin, L,H; Gutman, H.; and Hutton, P.H., *Technologies of the Self,* Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. "Growing Up White: Feminism, Racism, and the Social

Geography of Childhood.", *Feminist Review,* 45 (Autumn): 51-84.

Frazer, Elisabeth. 1987. "Teenage Girls Reading Jackie", *Media, Culture, and Society,* 9: 407-25.

Frazer, Elisabeth. 1989. "Feminist Talk and Talking About Feminism: Teenage Girls' Discourses of Gender", *Oxford Review of Education,* 15, 3: 281-90.

French, Marilyn. 1992. *The War Against Women,* London: Hamish Hamilton.

Furlong, Andy and Cartmel, Fred. 1997. *Young People and Social Change: Individualisation and Risk in Late Modernity,* Buckingham: Open University.

Gamman, Lorraine. 1992. "Review of *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen", Feminist Review,* no. 41: 121-125.

Gaskell, Jane. 1985. "Course Enrolment in the High School: The Perspective of Working-Class Females", *Sociology of Education,* vol. 58:48-59.

Gatens, Moira. 1991. *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives in Difference and Equality,* Cambridge: Polity.

Gatens, Moira. 1992. "Power, Bodies, and Difference", pp. 120-137 in Barrett, Michèle and Philips, Anne, eds., *Destabilizing Theory,* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self Identity,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *The Transformation of Intimacy,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gilligan, Carol. 1982. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Greer, Germaine. 1999. *The Whole Woman,* London: Doubleday.

Griffin, Christine. 1985. *Typical Girls?,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Griffin, Christine. 1989. "'I'm Not a Women's Libber But. . . ': Feminism, Consciousness, and Identity", *The Social Identity of Women,* pp. 173-93 in Skevington, S. and Baker, D., eds., London: Sage.

Griffin, Christine. 1993. *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Griffin, Christine. 1995. "Review of Sugar and Spice: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls", *Journal of Gender Studies,* vol. 4, no. 1:110.

Griffin, Susan. 1984. *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her,* London: The Women's Press.

Griffiths, Joanna. 1999. "Up For It Girls", *Saturday Review, The Guardian,* February 6, 1999:8.

Griffiths, Morwenna. 1995. *Feminisms and the Self: The Web of Identity,* London: Routledge.

Griffiths, Vivienne. 1995. *Adolescent Girls and Their Friends,* Aldershot: Avebury.

Grosz, Elizabeth. 1993. "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason, pp. 187-216 in Alcoff, Linda and Potter, Elizabeth, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies,* London: Routledge.

Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hall, Stuart. 1992. "The Question of Cultural Identity", pp. 273-326 in Hall, Stuart; Held, David and McGrew, Tony, eds., *Modernity and Its Futures,* Cambridge: Polity.

Hall, Stuart. 1996. "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?", pp.1-17 in Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity,* London: Sage.

Hall, Stuart and Paul Du Gay, eds. 1996. *Questions of Cultural Identity,* London: Sage.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, 14, no. 3: 575-599.

Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Harding, Sandra. 1990. "Feminism, Science, and the Anti-Enlightenment Critiques", pp: 83-106 in Nicholson, Linda A, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism,* New York: Routledge.

Harding, Sandra. 1991. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge: Thinking From Women's Lives,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Harding, Sandra. 1993. "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is 'Strong Objectivity'?", in Alcoff, Linda and Elisabeth Potter, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies,* London: Routledge.

Hartsock, Nancy. 1983. "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground For a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism", pp: 283-310 in Harding, Sandra and Hintikka, M.B., eds., *Discovering Reality,* Amsterdam: D. Reidal.

Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Hassan, Ihab. 1985. "The Culture of Postmodernism", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 2, no. 3:119-129.

Hawkesworth, Mary E. 1989. "Knower, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth", *Signs*, vol. 14, no. 31:533-557.

Heath, Sue. 1999. "Young Adults and Household Formation in the 1990s", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 20, no. 4:545-561.

Heelas, Paul. 1997. "Introduction", pp. 1-19 in Heelas, Paul; Lash, Scott and Morris, Paul, eds., *Detraditionalisation: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Heelas, Paul; Lash, Scott and Morris, Paul, eds. 1997. *Detraditionalisation: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Hekman, Susan. 1990. *Gender and Knowledge,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hetherington, Kevin. 1998. *Expressions of Identity*, London: Sage.

Hey, Valerie. 1997. *The Company She Keeps*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Hirsch, Marianne and Evelyn Fox Keller, eds. 1990. *Conflicts in Feminism*, London: Routledge.

Holland, Dorothy. 1992. "Review of Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 98, no. 11:179-80.

Holland, Janet; Ramazanoglu, Caroline; Sharp, Sue; and Thompson, Rachel. 1994. "Power and Desire: The Embodiment of Female Sexuality", *Feminist Review*, 46: 21-38.

Holland, Janet; Ramazanoglu, Caroline; Sharp, Sue; and Thompson, Rachel. 1996. "Reputations: Journeying Into Gendered Power Relations", pp. 239-260 in Weeks, Jeffrey and Holland, Janet, eds., *Sexual Cultures: Communities, Values, and Intimacy*, London: MacMillan.

Hollands, Robert G. 1990. *The Long Transition,* Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I A Woman?*, London: Pluto Press.

Hooks, bell. 1991. "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women", pp. 27- 41 in Gunew, Sneja, ed., *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*, London: Routledge.

Hooks, bell. 1991b. *Yearning,* London: Turnaround.

Humm, Maggie. 1992. *Feminism: A Reader,* New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Humm, Maggie. 1995. *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, New York: Prentice Hall.

Huyssen, Andreas. 1990. "Mapping the Postmodern", pp. 234-277 in Nicholson, Linda A., ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism,* New York: Routledge.

Irigaray, Luce. 1985. *The Speculum of the Other Woman,* translated by Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Irwin, Sarah. 1995. *Rights of Passage,* London: UCL.

Jaggar, Alison and Rothenberg, Paula, eds. 1993. *Feminist Frameworks,* New York: McGraw.

Jaggar, Gill and Wright, Caroline, eds. 1999. *Changing Family Values*, London: Routledge.

Jameson, Frederic. 1984. "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", *New Left Review*, 146:53-93.

Jamieson, Lynn. 1998. *Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jary, David and Jary, Julia. 1995. "The Transformations of Anthony Giddens – The Continuing Story of Structuration Theory", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 12:141-160.

Jervis, John. 1998. *Exploring the Modern: Patterns of Western Culture and Civilization*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Jones, Alison. 1993. "Becoming a 'Girl': Post-structuralist Suggestions For Educational Research", *Gender and Education*, vol. 5, no. 2:157-166.

Jones, Gill and Wallace, Claire. 1990. "Beyond Individualisation: What Sort of Social Change?", pp. 134-154 in Chisholm, Lynne; Büchner, Peter;

Krüger, Heinz-Hermann; and Brown, Phillip, eds., *Childhood, Youth and Social Change: A Comparative Perspective,* London: The Falmer Press.

Joyce, P. 1994. *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth Century England,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kellner, Douglas. 1988. "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 5:239-69.

Kellner, Douglas. 1992. "Popular Culture and the Construction of Postmodern Identities", in Lash, Scott and Friedman, Jonathan, eds., *Modernity and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Kitzinger, Celia. 1992. "The Individuated Self Concept: A Critical Analysis of Social Constructionist Writing on Individualism", pp. 221-250 in Breakwell, Glynis M., ed., *Social Psychology of Identity and the Self Concept*, London: Academic Press Limited.

Kumar, Krishan. 1995. *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Laclau, Ernesto. 1990. *New Reflections on The Revolution of Our Time.* London: Verso.

Lash, Scott and Friedman, Jonathan, eds. 1992. *Modernity and Identity,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Lash, Scott and Urry, John. 1994. *Economies of Signs and Space,* London: Sage.

Lather, Patti. 1991. *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern,* New York: Routledge.

Lees, Sue. 1986. *Losing Out: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls,* London: Hutchinson.

Lees, Sue. 1993. *Sugar and Spice: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls,* London: Penguin.

Lemert, Charles. 1992. "Subjectivity's Limit: The Unsolved Riddle of the Standpoint", *Sociological Theory,* vol. 10, no. 1:63-72.

Luke, Timothy W. 1996. *Identity, Meaning and Globalisation: Detraditionalisation in Postmodern Space-time Compression,* pp. 109-133 in Heelas, Paul; Lash, Scott and Morris, Paul, eds., *Detraditionalisation: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massouri, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

MacCannell, Dean and Juliet Flower MacCannell. 1987. "The Beauty System", pp. 206-238 in Armstrong, Nancy and Leonard Tennenhouse, eds., London: Methuen.

MacSween, Morag. 1993. *Anorexic Bodies*, London: Routledge.

Maffesoli, Michel. 1996. *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, London: Sage.

Marshall, Barbara. 1994. *Engendering Modernity: Feminism, Social Theory and Social Change,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Martin, Luther H.; Gutman, Huck; Hutton, Patrick H. 1988. *Technologies of the Self*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Mason, Jennifer. 1996. *Qualitative Researching,* London: Sage.

Mason, Jennifer. 2000. "Deciding Where to Live: Relational Reasoning and Narratives of the Self", *Centre For Research on Family, Kinship, and Childhood Working Papers,* Leeds: University of Leeds.

May, Carl and Cooper, Andrew. 1995. "Personal Identity and Social Change: Some Theoretical Considerations", *Acta Sociologica*, 38:75-85.

McNay, Lois. 1999. "Gender, Habitus and the Field", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 16, no. 1:95-117.

McRobbie, Angela. 1978. "Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity", in Women's Studies Group, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, *Women Take Issue: Aspects of Women's Subordination,* London: Hutchinson.

McRobbie, Angela. 1985. "Invisible Rules", *New Society,* vol. 72, no. 1172:404-405.

McRobbie, Angela. 1991. *Feminism and Youth Culture,* London: Macmillan Education.

McRobbie, Angela. 1993. "Shut up and Dance: Youth Culture and Changing Modes of Femininity", *Cultural Studies*, vol. 7:406-426.

McRobbie, Angela. 1994. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture,* London: Routledge.

Mestrovic, Stjepan. 1998. *Anthony Giddens: The Last Modernist*, London: Routledge.

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, London: Sage.

Miller, Jane. 1991. "Some of Our Best Friends", *New Statesman and Society*, vol. 3, no. 136:35-36.

Morgan, David L. 1996. *Family Connections,* Cambridge: Polity Pres.

Mouzelis, Nicos. 1999. "Exploring Post-Traditional Orders: Individual Reflexivity, 'Pure Relations' and Duality of Structure", pp. 83-97 in O'Brien, Martin; Penna, Sue; and Hay, Colin, eds., *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Environment and Identity in Giddens' Social Theory*, London: Longman.

Newman, Melissa. 1994. "Review of Sugar and Spice: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls", *Women's Studies International Forum,* vol. 17, no. 4:451-453.

Nicholson, Linda A, ed. 1990. *Feminism/Postmodernism,* New York: Routledge.

O'Brien, Martin. 1999. "Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Identity, and Environment in Giddens' Social Theory", pp. 17-38 in O'Brien, Martin; Penna, Sue; and Hay, Colin, eds., *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Environment and Identity in Giddens' Social Theory*, London: Longman.

O'Brien, Martin; Penna, Sue; and Hay, Colin, eds. 1999. *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Environment and Identity in Giddens' Social Theory*, London: Longman.

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). 1991. *Social Class Based on Occupation: Definitions in terms of Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Unit Groups and Employment Status.* London: HMSO.

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). 1995. *General Household Survey 1993,* London. HMSO.

Olesen, Virginnia. 1994. "Feminsims and Models of Qualitative Research", pp:158-174 in. Denzin, Norman K and. Lincoln, Yvonna S, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* London: Sage Publications.

Orbach Susie. 1986. *Hungerstrike: The Anorectic's Struggle As a Metaphor for Our Age*, London: Faber and Faber.

Poovey, Mary. 1988. "Feminism and Deconstruction", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1:51-65.

Probyn, Elspeth. 1987. "The Anorexic Body", pp201-212 in Kroker, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, eds., *Panic Sex*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

Probyn, Elspeth. 1993. *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies,* London: Routledge.

Purvis, June. 1986. "Double Standards", *New Society,* vol. 77, no. 1227:31.

Radley, Alan. 1995. "The Elusory Body and Social Constructionist Theory", *Body & Society,* vol. 1, no. 2: 3-23.

Rajchman, John, ed. 1996. *The Identity in Question,* London: Routledge.

Rapp, Rayna. 1988. "Is the Legacy of Second Wave Feminism Post-Feminism?", *Socialist Review,* 97: 31-37.

Rayner, Jay. 2000. "We Want to Be Alone", *Review, The Observer*, Sunday, January 16, 2000:1-2.

Rich, Adrienne. 1977. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution,* London: Virago.

Richardson, Laurel. 1994. "Writing: A Method of Inquiry", pp: 516-529 in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y.S., eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riley, Denise. 1988. *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History,* London: MacMillan Press Inc.

Riseborough, George. 1993. "Learning a Living or Living a Learning?", pp.32-69 in Bates, Inge and Riseborough, George, eds., *Youth and Inequality,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Roberts, K. 1995. *Youth and Employment in Modern Britain,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, K; Clark, S. C. and Wallace, C. 1994. "Flexibility and Individualisation. A Comparison of Transitions Into Employment in England and Germany", *Sociology,* 28: 31-54.

Roberts, Yvonne. 1992. *Mad About Women: Can There Ever be Fair Play Between the Sexes?,* London: Virago.

Roger, John J. 1996. *Family Life and Social Control*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Roiphe, Katie. 1994. *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism,* London: Hamish Hamilton.

Roker, Debra. 1993. "Gaining the Edge: Girls at a Private School", pp. 122-138 in Bates, Inge and Riseborough, George, eds., *Youth and Inequality,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Rose, Nikolas. 1996a. 'Authority and the Genealogy of the Subject', pp. 294-327 in Heelas, Paul; Lash, Scott; and Morris, Paul, eds., *Detraditionalisation: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Rose, Nikolas. 1996b. 'Identity, Genealogy, History', pp. 128-150 in Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity,* London: Sage.

Rose, Nikolas. 1998. *Inventing Ourselves*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenau, Pauline Marie. 1992. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press,

Roseneil, Sasha. 1995. *Disarming Patriarchy,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Roseneil, Sasha. 1999. "Postmodern Feminist Politics: The Art of the (Im)possible?", *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 6:161-182.

Roseneil, Sasha and Seymour, Julie, eds. 1999. *Practising Identities,* Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd.

Rudd, Peter and Evans, Karen. 1998. "Structure and Agency in Youth Transitions: Student Experiences of Vocational Further Education", *Journal of Youth Studies,* vol. 1, no. 1:39-62.

Rutherford, Jonathan, ed. 1990. *Identity,* London: Lawrence and Wisehart.

Sarup, Madan. 1996. *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Scott, Joan W. 1988. 'Deconstructing Equality versus Difference: Or the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism', *Feminist Studies,* 14, no. 1.

Scott, Joan W. 1992. "Experience", pp. 22-40 in Butler, Judith and Scott, Joan W., eds., *Feminists Theorise the Political,* New York: Routledge.

Seidman, Steven. 1997. "Relativizing Sociology: The Challenge of Cultural Studies", pp. 37-61 in Long, Elizabeth, ed., *From Sociology to Cultural Studies*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Seidman, Steven. 1998. *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory in the Postmodern Era*, 2nd Ed., Oxford: Blackwell.

Seigel, Jerrold. 1999. "Problematising the Self", pp. 281- 314 in Bonnell, Victoria E. and Hunt, Lynn, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sharpe, Sue. 1976. *Just Like a Girl: How Young Girls Learn to Be Women,* London: Penguin.

Sharpe, Sue. 1994. *Just Like a Girl: How Young Girls Learn to Be Women, 2nd edition,* London: Penguin.

Shilling, Chris. 1993. *The Body and Social Theory,* London: Sage.

Shilling, Chris, 1997, "The Body and Difference", pp. 63-120 in Woodward, Kathryn, ed., *Identity and Difference*, London: Sage.

Shilling, Chris and Mellor, Philip A. 1996. "Embodiment, Structuration Theory and Modernity: Mind/Body Dualism and the Repression of Sensuality", *Body and Society*, vol. 2, no. 4: 1-15.

Silva, Elizabeth B. and Smart, Carol, eds. 1999. *The New Family?,* London: Sage.

Silverman, David. 1993. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, London: Sage.

Skeggs, Beverly. 1997. *Formations of Class and Gender,* London: Sage Publications.

Smart, Barry. 1992. *Modern Conditions, Postmodern Controversies*, London: Routledge.

Smart, Barry. 1997. "Postmodern Social Theory", pp.396-428 in Turner, Bryan S. ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Smart, Carol. 1993. "Proscription, Prescription and the Desire For Certainty?", *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, vol. 13: 37-54.

Smart, Carol and Neale, Bren. 1999. *Family Fragments?,* Cambridge: Polity.

Smith, Dennis. 1992. "Review Article: Modernity, Postmodernity and the New Middles Ages", *Sociological Review*, vol. 40, no. 4:754-771.

Smith, Dorothy E. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Smith, Dorothy E. 1988. "Femininity as Discourse", pp. 37-59 in Roman, Leslie G. and Christian Smith, Linda K., eds., *Becoming Feminine: The Politics of Popular Culture,* Philadelphia: The Falmer Press.

Smith, Dorothy E. 1990. *Texts, Facts, and Femininity,* London: Routledge.

Spelman, Elizabeth V. 1990. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought,* London: The Women's Press.

Spivak, Gayatri. 1987. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politic* , London: Methuen.

Spivak, Gayatri. 1990. *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues,* London: Routledge.

Stanley, Liz and Sue Wise. 1990. "Method, Methodology, and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes", pp:20-63 in Liz Stanley, ed., *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology,* London: Routledge.

Strauss, Anslem and Corbin, Juilet. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research*, London: Sage.

Stuart, Andrea. 1990. "Feminism: Dead or Alive?", pp. 28-42 in Rutherford, Jonathan, ed., *Identity*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Székely, Éva. 1988. *Never Too Thin*, Toronto: The Women's Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1989. *Sources of the Self,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, David. 1998. "Social Identity and Social Policy: Engagements with Postmodern Theory", *Journal of Social Policy*, vol. 27, no. 3:329-350.

Thompson, John B. 1996. *Tradition and Self in a Mediated World*, pp. 89-108 in Heelas, Paul; Lash, Scott and Morris, Paul, eds., *Detraditionalisation: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Thrift, Nigel. 1993. "The Arts of the Living, the Beauty of the Dead: Anxieties of Being in the work of Anthony Giddens", *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 17, no. 1:111-121.

Tong Rosemary. 1998. *Feminist Thought 2nd Edition,* London: Routledge.

Turner, Bryan S. 1992. *Regulating Bodies*, London: Routledge.

Walby, Sylvia. 1997. *Gender Transformations,* London: Routledge.

Walter, Natasha. 1998. *The New Feminism,* London: Little, Brown and Company.

Weedon, Chris. 1997. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory,* 2nd Ed, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Weeks, Jeffrey. 1995. *Invented Moralities: Sexual Values in An Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge: Polity.

Weir, Allison. 1996. *Sacrificial Logics: Feminist Theory and the Critique of Identity,* London: Routledge.

Wendell, Susan. 1996. *The Rejected Body*, London: Routledge.

Whelehan, Imelda. 1995. *Modern Feminist Thought: From 2nd Wave to 'Post-Feminism'*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labour,* Farnborough: Saxon House.

Wolcott, Harry F. 1994. *Transforming Qualitative Data,* London: Sage.

Wolf, Naomi. 1990. *The Beauty Myth,* London: Chatto and Windus.

Wolf, Naomi. 1993. *Fire With Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century,* London: Chatto and Windus.

Woodward, Kathryn. 1997. "Concepts of Identity and Difference", in Woodward, Kathryn, ed., *Identity and Difference,* London: Sage.

Wright, Caroline and Jaggar, Gill. 1999. "End of Century, End of Family, Shifting Discourses of Family 'Crisis'", pp. 17- 37 in Jaggar, Gill and Wright, Caroline, eds., *Changing Family Values,* London: Routledge.

Young, Judith. 1987. "Review of Losing Out: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls", *Sociology,* vol. 21, no. 1:148-149.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Young, Shelagh. 1989. "Feminism and the Politics of Power", pp. 173-188 in Gamman, Lorraine and Marshment, Margaret, eds., *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture,* Seattle: Real Comet Press.